
POSITION STATEMENT

National Association of EMS Educators
Quality of Continuing Medical Education
in the Prehospital Arena

Accepted by the NAEMSE Board of Directors July 12, 2004



Summary: It is the position of the National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) that achieving quality in Continuing Medical Education (CME) is an essential component of every EMS system. This position is based upon the belief that CME provides for continued learning and that this learning serves both the public and the EMS profession. It is incumbent upon all EMS educators to continually review and critique educational offerings to ensure their quality. The ultimate goal of all EMS education, including CME, is improvement of patient care.

Emergency medical services (EMS) personnel undergo comprehensive initial education based upon the Department of Transportation national standard curricula. It is critical that EMS personnel continue to learn throughout their careers by participating in on-going learning. CME introduces new concepts, skills and practices based upon on-going research and evolving standards of practice.

This position statement will focus upon the importance of and methods for evaluating the quality of CME.

Background

Quality can be defined as a level of excellence, or a degree of merit or worth¹. It can also be defined as effectiveness in achieving institutional goals; such as the degree to which educational offerings prepare students to be effective and capable within the circumstances of their lives and work.⁴

Methods for evaluating the quality of educational offerings are many and varied. A proscriptive² approach would lead an evaluator to determine a list of outcome goals for a program and then to evaluate the degree to which those objectives were met. A nonproscriptive² approach would lead an evaluator to determine the most successful elements of a program without setting benchmarks prior to the evaluation. Other evaluation methods include blue ribbon panels, educational connoisseurship, accreditation, expertise, adversarial (judicial “pro” and “con”) and open debates.³ Each of these methods can allow the quality (or worth) of a program to be determined. A key element of any evaluation will be using its

results to at least maintain current levels of quality and potentially to improve upon them.

Integrated Approach

An integrated approach to CME is needed to maintain and improve its quality. This approach should involve the EMS provider, management, and Medical Director. To improve educational outcomes, the EMS provider must be an integral component in the process of delivering CME, providing feedback and suggestions. Management must provide financial and philosophical support for participation in CME. The Medical Director should be involved in the development, delivery and evaluation of CME, providing key insights and medical advice. Assessments of CME may include quantitative and qualitative methods and should be designed to meet the needs of the organization. CME that ignores the demands of the EMS system becomes irrelevant and may have an adverse effect on all those who participate in it.

Healthcare providers are held to the highest standards in all aspects of their profession. By adhering to these high standards, EMS professionals demonstrate their competence in matters related to EMS. This competence provides assurance to the public and to the EMS profession that the provider will demonstrate excellence in all aspects of patient care. Public confidence in EMS is critical to the long-term growth of the profession. To obtain and maintain this confidence, the EMS professional must strive to engage in on-going high-quality CME.

It is the duty of EMS educators to advocate quality in all CME programs, which in turn will meet the current and future needs of the EMS profession, and result in improvement of patient care.

¹ *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. Tyler, R. W. (1949) Chicago: University of Chicago Press

² *The methodology of evaluation*. Scriven, M. (1967). In R. W. Tyler, R. M. Gange, & Scriven (Eds.), *Perspectives of curriculum evaluation* (pp. 39 - 83). AERA Monograph Series on Curriculum Evaluation. No. 1. Chicago: Rand McNally.

³ *Program Evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*. Worthen, B., Sanders, J. & Fitzpatrick, J. (1997). Addison Wesley Longman: White Plains, NY

⁴ *Current Issues in Engineering Education Quality*, Ahmad Ibrahim, Global J of Engrng. Education, Volume 3, No. 3