

Physician FAQ

Tracking and reporting questions

1. How are CME credits tracked for physicians?

There is no central repository for tracking *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits*[™]. Accredited CME providers are required to keep records of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits*[™] awarded to physicians who participate in their activities for 6 years. Because credits may be obtained from a variety of CME providers, physicians should maintain a record of their CME credits from all sources.

Physicians should keep in mind the credit requirements of various entities when deciding how long to keep records of their CME activities. While some licensing boards may only require a two year history, medical specialty certifying boards may require six years or more.

2. Why do I need credit?

Physicians may be required to demonstrate that they have obtained CME credit by state licensing boards, medical specialty societies, ABMS specialty boards, hospital medical staffs, the Joint Commission, insurance groups, and others.

3. For what purposes is *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit*[™] used?

AMA PRA Category 1 Credit[™] is the most commonly accepted form of CME credit for physicians. AMA PRA Credit is recognized and accepted by hospital credentialing bodies, state medical licensure boards, medical specialty certifying boards, medical specialty societies, Joint Commission and other organizations. AMA PRA Credit is also the basis for receiving the AMA Physician's Recognition Award.

4. What is the Physician's Recognition Award?

The Physician's Recognition Award (PRA) (www.ama-assn.org/go/pr) is a certificate issued by the AMA to physicians who have met certain CME requirements. It recognizes physicians who have demonstrated their commitment to staying current with advances in medicine.

The AMA PRA may be applied for online (<http://www.ama-assn.org/go/applypra>,) or a PDF version (<http://www.ama-assn.org/go/pr>) may be completed and submitted by mail or fax.

5. What documentation does a physician receive for participating in a CME activity provided by an accredited CME provider? How long must providers maintain participation records?

Many accredited CME providers will issue a credit certificate or transcript at the completion of an activity. Accredited CME providers are required to make available documentation on credits claimed at the physician's request. These records must be maintained by the CME provider for at least six (6) years. (Please note that some providers place a limit on the amount of time you have to claim your credit, but once claimed they must keep the records for six years from the date of the activity.)

CME opportunities

6. How do I locate CME activities?

There is no central repository of CME activities. The AMA does not maintain a list of CME opportunities beyond those directly sponsored by the AMA. AMA sponsored CME opportunities (<http://www.ama-assn.org/go/cme>) may be found on the AMA website.

The ACCME (www.accme.org) maintains a list of accredited CME providers on its website. A physician can contact individual CME providers for specific CME opportunities.

7. How do I identify legitimate AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ activities?

AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ may only be awarded by the AMA or by organizations accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) or a recognized state medical society (SMS). Visit www.accme.org for a list of the approximately 2,500 recognized providers.

Physicians should be aware that some non-accredited organizations advertise “Category 1 Credits” or “CME’s offered” but these are not the same as “*AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*.”

When selecting CME activities, physicians should be certain the credit is being awarded by an accredited CME provider. Accredited CME providers are required to have two statements on their promotional materials. One must state the source of their accreditation (ACCME or SMS) while the other designates the maximum number of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits for the activity. To help physicians identify legitimate AMA PRA Category 1 Credit activities, the AMA requires its CME providers to trademark the credit phrase (“*AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*”). If credit is not indicated in this manner, physicians should question whether the activity is in fact eligible for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit.

CME requirements for licensing and credentialing

8. What are the CME requirements for medical licensing?

CME requirements for licensure and relicensure vary depending on the jurisdiction. Sixty-one (61) state and US territory licensing boards (both allopathic and osteopathic) now have mandatory CME requirements for relicensure. Forty-eight (48) states and territories will accept a current AMA PRA certificate or an AMA approved PRA application as documentation of meeting the CME requirements. Physicians can find the 2008 State licensure and relicensing requirements (<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama1/pub/upload/mm/40/table16-2008.pdf>) on the AMA website (www.ama-assn.org/go/pr) but should contact the appropriate state medical board to get the most recent information on state CME requirements and the reporting mechanism.

9. How can the AMA PRA be used to demonstrate Joint Commission compliance?

The Joint Commission requires that, at hospitals and health care organizations it accredits, physicians with clinical privileges document their CME. The Joint Commission will accept correctly completed AMA PRA applications stamped “approved” by the AMA as documented physician compliance with JCAHO CME requirements.

Earning credit for CME activities

10. How does a physician earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

One way is to participate in activities that are designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider. CME providers accredited by the ACCME or an ACCME-recognized state medical society may designate educational activities for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* if they have been planned and implemented in accordance with the AMA requirements (pages 4-5 www.ama-assn.org/go/prabooklet) and those of their accreditor. If an activity has not been designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider, participants may not claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for that activity. A CME provider may choose, at its discretion, to not offer credit for an educational activity.

Physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* (Page 18 www.ama-assn.org/go/prabooklet) for non-designated educational activities if they (1) comply with the AMA definition of CME; (2) comply with the AMA ethical opinions on Gifts to Physicians from Industry and on Ethical Issues in CME (i.e., are not promotional); (3) and a physician finds to be a worthwhile learning experience related to his/her practice.

Additionally, physicians may apply directly to the AMA for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for specific types of activities that have been judged to be of educational value to physicians and worthy of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. Please see question 12 for the types of activities that qualify for direct credit.

11. How can a physician ensure that an activity is designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider?

Accredited CME providers are required to indicate, through a prescribed designation statement on promotional materials, that an activity is designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. In 2006 the AMA asserted trademark protection on AMA credit to help physicians ensure that the credit being designated for a particular activity is actually *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.

Physicians can also ensure that the organization designating the credit is an accredited CME provider by searching the lists of national and state providers on the ACCME website (www.accme.org).

12. What types of activities qualify for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ activities fall into two broad areas: activities designated by a CME provider and direct credit awarded by the AMA.

Provider designated activities are those for which an accredited CME provider awards *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to the physician learners. CME activities designated by accredited CME providers include the following:

- Live activities - CME activities that physicians must attend (in person or virtually) such as national conferences, live Internet teleconferences, local workshops, seminars, grand rounds, journal clubs or departmental scientific meetings. Accredited CME providers may also choose to award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to faculty of live activities that are designated for such credit. If the providers choose not to offer faculty credit physicians may claim this credit directly from the AMA.
- Enduring materials – CME activities such as printed, recorded, audio, video and/or online/electronic activities planned as educational activities.
- Journal-based CME - CME activities within a peer-reviewed, professional journal designated for credit (an accredited provider will designate the activity for credit, e.g. JAMA).
- Test item writing – CME activities that include researching, drafting and defending potential questions for examinations given by the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) or a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), or for peer reviewed, published, self-assessment educational activities from a national medical specialty society. This must be a robust process which includes a group peer review.
- Manuscript review (for journals) – CME activity in which journal manuscripts are critically reviewed under the direction of an editor working with an accredited CME provider. The review must be of an original contribution for publication in a medical journal indexed by MEDLINE.
- Performance improvement – CME activities through an accredited CME provider involving structured, long-term processes by which a physician or group of physicians can learn about specific performance measures, retrospectively assess their practice, apply these measures prospectively over a useful interval, and re-evaluate their performance.
- Internet point of care learning - CME activity developed by an accredited CME provider that includes structured, self-directed, online learning by physicians on topics relevant to their

clinical practice. Learning for this activity is driven by a reflective process in which physicians must document their clinical question, the sources consulted and the application to practice.

- Other activities – other structured activities may be designated for credit, i.e. committee learning, learning plans/contracts.

Direct credit activities are those CME activities a physician may engage in and receive *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* directly from the AMA by completing a Direct Credit Application, or Resident Credit Application (www.ama-assn.org/go/pra).

Direct Credit activities include the following:

- Teaching in Live CME Activities – Credit may only be claimed for an original presentation at a live activity that is designated for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™.
- Publishing articles - Publishing, as a lead author, an article in a journal included in the MEDLINE bibliographic database.
- Poster presentations - Preparing a poster presentation, which is also included in the published abstracts, for a conference designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.
- Medically related advanced degrees
- American Board of Medical Specialty (ABMS) member board certification, recertification, and/or Maintenance of Certification© (MOC) - Recognizes the educational effort associated with successfully completing an ABMS board certification process.
- Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredited education – Recognizes the educational effort associated with successful participation in an Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education accredited residency or fellowship program.
- Independent learning

To claim the credit you will submit a copy of the completed Direct Credit Application along with required documentation and the appropriate processing fee. Complete instructions are found on the form itself.

13. What is *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*?

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ (page 18 www.ama-assn.org/go/prabooklet) is defined as educational activities not designated for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ that: (1) comply with the AMA definition of CME; (2) comply with the AMA ethical opinions on Gifts to Physicians from Industry and on Ethical Issues in CME (i.e., are not promotional); (3) and a physician finds to be a worthwhile learning experience related to his/her practice.

Physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for such learning activities as:

- Teaching residents, medical students or other health professionals
- Unstructured online searching and learning (i.e., not Internet PoC)
- Reading authoritative medical literature
- Consultation with peers and medical experts
- Small group discussions
- Self assessment activities
- Medical writing
- Preceptorships
- Research
- Participating in live activities not designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*

In each case, the physician determines the number of credits by claiming one (1) *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for each 60-minute hour engaged in the learning activity. Physicians may claim credit in 15 minute, or 0.25 credits, increments, and should round to the nearest quarter hour.

Physicians should claim and document credit for appropriate *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* activities on their AMA PRA certificate application form.

14. I've done some activities for which I'd like to claim AMA PRA Category 2 Credit – how do I get a certificate?

There is no certificate which will state you have been awarded AMA PRA Category 2 Credit. This credit is entirely self claimed and self-documented by physicians.

There are no specific documentation requirements for AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™. For purposes of applying for the AMA PRA, we ask physicians to list the activity Title, Subject or Content Area, Date(s), and number of AMA PRA Category 2 Credits claimed (hours spent in the activity).

15. Can a physician earn AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ for teaching at a CME activity? If so, how much credit?

Accredited CME providers may choose to award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* to faculty for the learning that occurs in the preparation of an original presentation as part of an *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* live activity. The formula for granting such credit is 2 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* per participant credit (or a 2:1 ratio). Like other *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* awarded based on time metrics, credit can be designated in 15 minute increments. No credits are given for repeat presentations of the same material, it is the responsibility of the physician to only claim the credit once, and credit may not be simultaneously earned as both a presenter and learner.

If the provider chooses not to award faculty credit, physicians may claim this credit directly from the AMA by completing the Direct Credit Application (www.ama-assn.org/go/cme).

For serving as faculty for other types of non-promotional educational activities physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

16. Can a physician obtain AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ for reading articles published in a professional journal?

Some articles in peer-reviewed journals have been planned as learning activities by accredited CME providers and are called Journal-based CME. These articles, which include a mechanism for physician reflection and/or interaction, can be designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by the accredited provider and physicians can claim this credit through submission of the required documentation to the provider. Physicians may not claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for reading articles that are not designated for credit by an accredited CME provider.

17. Can CME credit be claimed for the successful participation in a residency or fellowship program?

Residents/fellows have two choices for obtaining a CME benefit for participation in an ACGME accredited residency or fellowship program:

1. A resident/fellow can receive a standard one, two or three-year AMA PRA certificate; each year of completed training is accepted for one year of the AMA PRA (up to three years), or
2. A resident/fellow can claim twenty (20) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* per year (up to three years) for participating in a residency program.

To obtain credit for participating in a residency/fellowship program, the physician must claim the credit directly from the AMA by completing the Resident Credit Application. (www.ama-assn.org/go/pr).

18. Can CME credit be claimed for certification or recertification with an ABMS member specialty board?

Physicians have two choices for obtaining a CME benefit for certification or recertification with an ABMS member specialty board:

1. A physician can receive a standard three year AMA PRA certificate for completing the process of certifying with an ABMS member board, or
2. A physician can claim twenty-five (25) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for successfully completing an ABMS board certification process.

To obtain credit for ABMS certification, the physician must apply directly to the AMA by completing (1) the AMA PRA online application <http://www.ama-assn.org/go/applypra> or AMA PRA written application (www.ama-assn.org/go/prawritten) to receive the AMA PRA certificate or (2) the Direct Credit Application. (www.ama-assn.org/go/pradirect) to receive a credit certificate. Physicians are responsible for ensuring that their board is a member-board of the ABMS (www.abms.org). Complete instructions, including substantiating documentation requirements and processing fees, are found on the forms.

19. Can medical specialty society CME award systems grant credits that reciprocate with the AMA's PRA system?

The AMA has reciprocal agreements with the American Academy of Family Physicians (Elective Credit) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (Cognates). You may not convert these credits to AMA PRA Category 1 Credit, but the Prescribed and Cognate credits will be accepted toward the Physician's Recognition Award with the equivalency of AMA PRA Category 1 Credits.

20. Can a physician get *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for attending international conferences?

If the organization offering the CME activity is an organization accredited by the ACCME or recognized state medical society, it can designate the activity for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit. The location of the activity has no effect on accredited organizations that provide CME in regard to their ability to designate AMA PRA Category 1 Credit. A physician attending such an event would receive credit in the same manner he/she would in the US.

Secondly, physicians attending international conferences that are sponsored by non-accredited organizations may be able to receive AMA PRA Category 1 Credit if the conference has been approved by the AMA's International Conference Recognition (ICR) Program. The ICR program was started in 1990 by the American Medical Association (AMA) House of Delegates. The AMA recognized that international congresses presented opportunities for physicians to participate in quality educational programs and collaborate with colleagues. The ICR program recognizes only a few events each year and provides physicians with an opportunity to earn AMA PRA Category 1 Credit at these approved events. A list of the approved conferences can be found at www.ama-assn.org/go/internationalcme.

Furthermore, physicians attending live activities approved by the European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME) for EACCME credit can earn AMA PRA Category 1 Credit. Physicians may submit a copy of their EACCME credit certificates with the completed application and fee to the AMA to receive AMA PRA Category 1 Credit. In order to receive credit, the activity must appear on the list of approved activities posted in the EACCME section of the UEMS website at www.uems.net.

Lastly, physicians attending international CME activities sponsored by nonaccredited organizations which are not approved by the ICR Program or the EACCME Reciprocity Agreement, may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for their participation provided the activity meets the definition of CME, is not promotional in nature, and is relevant to the physician's practice.

21. I attended a conference in Europe and received a certificate for EACCME credit – how do I get *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit*?™

In order to receive credit, the activity must appear on the list of approved activities posted in the EACCME section of the UEMS website at www.uems.net.

To apply for conversion of EACCME credit to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit*™, download the Application for EACCME Credit Conversion (www.ama-assn.org/go/prc) and submit (1) the completed application by fax or mail, (2) a copy of the EACCME credit certificate and (3) appropriate processing fee. A certificate of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit*™ will be mailed within four weeks

If you have any other specific questions, please contact cme@ama-assn.org.