



AMA PRA Credit System

Frequently asked questions for physicians

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General questions

1. Why do physicians need continuing medical education credit?

Physicians use continuing medical education (CME) credit to demonstrate that they have participated in educational activities and obtained CME credit to document meeting the requirements of state medical boards, medical specialty societies, specialty boards, hospital medical staffs, the Joint Commission, insurance groups and others.

2. What does *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* represent?

AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ represents that the physician has participated in an educational activity, and completed all requirements for such an activity, that is expected to “serve to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, and professional performance and relationships that a physician uses to provide services for patients, the public or the profession” as stated in the AMA’s definition of CME.

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

The purposes for which *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* is used include meeting CME requirements established by hospital credentialing bodies, state medical boards, medical specialty certifying boards, medical specialty societies, Joint Commission and other organizations. *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* is the most commonly accepted form of CME credit for physicians and is also the basis for receiving the AMA Physician’s Recognition Award.

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

There are three ways for physicians to earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*:

- a. By participating in certified activities sponsored by CME providers accredited by either the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) or an ACCME-recognized state medical society. Accredited CME providers are expected to ensure that activities certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* meet all requirements of both the AMA and their accreditor.
- b. By participating in certain activities recognized by the AMA as valid educational activities. Physicians receive *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for these activities (teaching at a live activity, publishing articles, poster presentations, medically related advanced degrees, ABMS member board certification and MOC®, and ACGME accredited education) directly from the AMA. More details can be found in question 54. [Further information](#) about qualifying activities can be found on the AMA website.
- c. By participating in certain international activities recognized by the AMA. Through its [International Conference Recognition Program](#), there are some international activities which the AMA directly certifies for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. Additionally, at this time the AMA has agreements with the [European Union of Medical Specialists](#), the [Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada](#) and the [Qatar Council for Healthcare Practitioners-Accreditation Department](#) for conversion of their CME credit to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. Visit the individual pages on the AMA website for more information.

Physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for participation in educational activities not certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* if the activity meets certain requirements. Please refer to the [AMA PRA booklet](#) for more information..

5. What types of CME activities may be certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* through an accredited CME provider?

The types of CME activities certified by U.S.-based accredited CME providers include the following:

- **Live activity**
Activity that occurs at a specific time as scheduled by the accredited CME provider. Participation may be in person or remotely as is the case of teleconferences or live internet webinars.

Faculty credit is a type of live activity for which physicians may earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*; there are two types of faculty credit:

- o Accredited CME providers may choose to certify a live activity to award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to their physician faculty to recognize the learning associated with preparation and teaching of an original presentation at the accredited CME provider's live activities that are certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. If the CME provider chooses not to offer faculty credit, physicians may claim this credit directly from the AMA.
- o Accredited CME providers that are also accredited by either the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (for faculty teaching medical students) and/or the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (for faculty teaching residents/fellows) are eligible to certify a live activity that recognizes the learning associated with teaching medical students and residents. Physicians may **not** claim credit directly from the AMA for this type of faculty credit.
- **Enduring material**
An activity that endures over a specified time and does not have a specific time or location designated for participation; rather, the participant determines whether and when to complete the activity.
- **Journal-based CME**
An activity that is planned and presented by an accredited provider and in which the learner reads one or more articles (or adapted formats for special needs) from a peer-reviewed, professional journal.
- **Test item writing**
An activity wherein physicians learn through their contribution to the development of examinations, or certain peer-reviewed self-assessment activities, by researching, drafting and defending potential test items.
- **Manuscript review**
Activity in which a learner participates in the critical review of an assigned journal manuscript during the pre-publication review process of a journal.
- **Performance improvement CME (PI CME)**
An activity structured as a three-stage process by which a physician or group of physicians learn about specific performance measures, assess their practice using the selected performance measures, implement interventions to improve performance related to these measures over a useful interval of time, and then reassess their practice using the same performance measures.
- **Internet point-of-care (PoC) learning (internet searching and learning)**
An activity in which a physician engages in self-directed, online learning on topics relevant to their clinical practice from a database whose content has been vetted by an accredited CME provider.
- **Other activity**
Accredited CME providers can introduce new instructional practices, as well as blend new and/or established learning formats appropriate to their learners and setting, as long as the activity meets all core requirements. Certified CME activities that do not fit within one of the established format categories must identify the learning format as "Other activity," followed by a short description of the activity in parentheses, in both the AMA Credit Designation Statement and on documentation provided to learners (certificates, transcripts, etc.).

All activities certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider must meet all requirements for one of the above learning formats as well as the AMA's core requirements for all activity formats.

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

Physicians can ensure an activity has been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by locating the prescribed AMA Credit Designation Statement that accredited CME providers are required to use on promotional and activity materials. In 2006 the AMA asserted trademark protection on *AMA PRA* credit to help physicians ensure that the credit being designated for a particular activity is actually *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.

The AMA Credit Designation Statement for all activities, except as described below, is as follows:

The «name of accredited CME provider» designates this «learning format» for a maximum of «number of credits» *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

For activities using the “Other” format, the format will be listed as “Other activity” followed by a short description of the activity in parentheses:

The «name of accredited CME provider» designates this other activity («short description») for a maximum of «number of credits» *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

The live activity teaching medical students and residents requires a slightly different AMA Credit Designation Statement, as the number of credits will not be known in advance:

The «name of accredited CME provider» designates this live activity for a maximum of 2 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* per 1 hour of interaction with medical students and/or residents/fellows. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Physicians can also ensure that the organization certifying the educational activity is an accredited CME provider by searching the lists of ACCME and state medical society accredited providers on the [ACCME](#) website.

7. What are the CME requirements for medical licensing?

CME requirements for licensure and license renewal vary depending on the jurisdiction. The vast majority of U.S. state and territory medical boards (both allopathic and osteopathic) have mandatory CME requirements for license renewal. A majority of these boards will accept a current AMA PRA certificate or an AMA approved AMA PRA application as documentation of meeting the CME requirements.

There is information about state CME requirements for license renewal on the [FSMB website](#), but physicians should contact the appropriate state medical board directly to get the most current information. The FSMB website also has a [list of state licensing boards](#).

8. What if my licensing board places a limit on the number of credits that can be used from specific types of activities?

Each entity that requires physicians to obtain CME credit can stipulate what will be accepted to meet that requirement. While the AMA doesn't place a limit on the number of credits that a physician can earn under any format, we do understand that there are state licensing board, certifying board and other regulations that physicians need to take into account.

As an example, the AMA, for the purpose of qualifying for the Physician's Recognition Award, does set maximums for some categories, i.e., physicians are limited to using 10 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* obtained for teaching at live *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities per year of the award. These limits are in place to encourage physicians to participate in multiple modes of learning in order to further enhance their professional development. For a full list of the categories and limits per category, please refer to the [AMA PRA booklet](#).

9. Is there a central database of CME activities that are being offered by accredited CME providers?

There is no centralized listing of all certified CME activities. The AMA maintains a list of the certified CME activities that are directly sponsored by the AMA as an accredited CME provider. These AMA sponsored [CME opportunities](#) may be found on the AMA website.

Another way to identify potential CME activities would be to contact specialty societies, medical schools and area hospitals that are accredited CME providers to inquire about CME opportunities. The [ACCME](#) maintains a list of accredited CME providers on its website.

10. How do physicians identify legitimate *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities?

Physicians can identify legitimate *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities by making certain the activity is certified by an accredited CME provider. In the U.S., *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* may only be awarded by the AMA or by organizations accredited by either the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) or an ACCME-recognized state medical society (SMS). Visit the [ACCME](#) website for a list of all currently accredited CME providers.

Accredited CME providers are required to have two statements on their promotional materials, one of which will state the source of their accreditation (ACCME or SMS). The other is the AMA Credit Designation Statement, which states the maximum number of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for which the activity has been certified. The AMA Credit Designation Statement for all activities except teaching medical students and residents is as follows:

The «name of accredited CME provider» designates this «learning format» for a maximum of «number of credits» *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

The live activity teaching medical students and residents requires a slightly different AMA Credit Designation Statement, as the number of credits will not be known in advance:

The «name of accredited CME provider» designates this live activity for a maximum of 2 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* per 1 hour of interaction with medical students and/or residents/fellows. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

To help physicians identify legitimate *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities, the AMA requires accredited 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™*.

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

Eligibility for credit

11. Who can be awarded *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

Only physicians are eligible to be awarded *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. For the purpose of awarding and claiming AMA PRA credit, the AMA defines physicians as those individuals who have obtained an MD, DO or equivalent medical degree from another country. A list of equivalent medical degrees may be found on the website of the [Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates](#). No other healthcare providers may be awarded *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.

12. May a physician that is not licensed in the U.S. be awarded *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

Yes. *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* may be awarded to any physician (defined by the AMA as MDs, DOs, or international physicians with equivalent degrees from other countries). The requirements for awarding *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to U.S. and non-U.S. licensed physicians are the same.

13. May physicians claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* more than once for the same activity?

It is each physician's ethical responsibility to only claim credit for activities in which they have learned something that will help their practice, i.e., physicians who complete PALS or ACLS on an annual basis and feel that it benefits their patient care to do so may claim credit for it each time.

14. What types of activities may not be claimed for AMA PRA credit?

CME credit may not be claimed for learning which is incidental to the regular professional activities or practice of a physician, such as learning that occurs from:

- Clinical experience
- Charity or mission work

- Surveying
- Serving on a committee, council task force, board, house of delegates or other professional workgroup
- Passing examinations that are not integrated with a certified activity

Learning formats: Live activity, faculty credit

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

Yes, physicians may earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for the learning that occurs in the preparation and teaching of an original presentation at a live activity certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. There are two ways physicians may obtain this credit:

- a. The physician can apply directly to the AMA (processing fee involved; [click here](#) for more information)
- b. The accredited CME provider may develop Faculty credit as a CME activity and award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to the faculty of their live activities for the learning associated with the preparation and teaching of an original presentation if they meet all AMA PRA requirements.

To calculate the number of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* earned as faculty:

- Physician faculty may claim credit based on a 2-1 ratio to presentation time. For example, faculty may be awarded 2 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for a one-hour presentation or 1.5 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for a 45-minute presentation for sessions that were designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. Credit should be rounded to the nearest one-quarter credit.
- Credit may only be claimed once for an original presentation; credit may not be claimed for subsequent presentations of the same material.
- Physician faculty may not claim credit as a participant for their own presentations; however, they may claim credit for other segments they attend as a participant at a certified live activity.

16. Can a physician earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for other types of teaching?

Physicians are now able to earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for the learning associated with teaching medical students and residents if the accredited CME provider is also accredited by the LCME and/or ACGME, and the activity is certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* in advance of physician participation. Please refer to [additional information](#) regarding this type of live activity. Physicians may not claim this credit directly from the AMA.

17. May an accredited CME provider award a faculty member *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for preparing and presenting an original presentation at a live activity that it certifies for credit?

Yes. Accredited CME providers may certify a live activity to award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to their physician faculty for original presentations at live *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities. This recognizes the learning associated with the preparation and teaching of an original presentation.

Credit is awarded to physician faculty for a live activity that is certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* in the following manner:

- Physician faculty may be awarded credit based on a 2-1 ratio to presentation time. For example, faculty may be awarded 2 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for an original one-hour presentation or 1.5 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for an original 45-minute presentation for sessions that were designated for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. Credit should be rounded to the nearest onequarter credit.
- Credit may only be claimed once for an original presentation; credit may not be claimed for subsequent presentations of the same material.

- Physician faculty may not claim credit as a participant for their own presentations; however, they may claim credit for other segments they attend as a participant at a certified live activity.

18. Is there another mechanism for a physician who serves as faculty to receive credit if a CME provider does not award credit for serving as faculty at their live *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities?

Yes. A physician who prepares and presents an original presentation at a live activity that has been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* may apply directly to the AMA for credit if the accredited CME provider for the activity did not award faculty credit. [Information about direct credit](#) can be found on the AMA website.

19. May a physician faculty member be awarded *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for a live presentation outside the U.S. during a certified CME activity sponsored by an accredited CME provider?

Yes. If the CME provider is accredited by the ACCME or an ACCME-recognized state medical society, the location of the activity has no bearing on the credit given to faculty or learners. These activities have the same requirements as if the activity took place within the United States.

20. May physicians be awarded credit if they prepare a presentation but do not actually do the presenting? If they present, but did not prepare the materials?

No. Faculty credit is a two-part process. The physician must learn in the process of preparing the original material and present it in order to be awarded faculty credit.

21. If a physician gives a one-hour lecture more than once, how many credits may be claimed?

Provided the live activity itself is certified for 1.0 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*, the physician may only claim 2.0 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* as faculty the first time the presentation is given. The credit is for the learning that occurs as the physician prepares the lecture, and may only be claimed once regardless of the number of times it is repeated.

22. Can a physician earn CME credit for teaching at an activity that has not been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

Non-promotional teaching of health care professionals at a live activity that has not been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* may be self-claimed and documented as *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* if the physician individually determines that it meets the requirements (see *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for more information). Promotional activities are not eligible for AMA credit.

23. Are physicians able to earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for learning associated with teaching medical students and residents?

Yes. In March of 2013 the AMA Council on Medical Education approved teaching medical students and residents as a type of live activity that can be certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. The credit is to recognize the learning that occurs as physicians prepare to teach, but the credit is calculated based on the time spent using what was learned in the preparation phase. More information can be found on the AMA website and in the AMA PRA booklet.

A key concept is that the CME credit being discussed is for learning, learning that is used to teach, not credit for teaching. If there is no learning, or the learning is not used to teach, then it is not appropriate for physicians to claim credit. CME credit is not a reward or payment, it is a recognition/acknowledgement/metric intended to note that the physician has engaged in an educational activity which serves to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills and professional performance and relationships that a physician uses to provide services for patients, the public or the profession.

24. What documentation is required from physicians?

From the AMA's perspective, physicians must claim credit appropriate to the time spent teaching what they learned in preparation for it. Since physicians must have learned in order to claim credit, and they are self-directed in their learning in this particular format, there must be some way of capturing that they do so. Please contact your accreditor to determine what documentation requirements they may have.

25. Is there a maximum number of credits that can be awarded to a physician in a year with this type of activity?

The AMA has not set a limit on the number of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* a physician may earn for this type of CME activity; the AMA has not set limits for any of the approved learning formats. If there is demonstrated learning involved, then the credit remains legitimate and appropriate regardless of the number. Licensing boards, other consumers of credit and CME providers may set limits if they so choose. As an example, the AMA, for the purpose of qualifying for the Physician Recognition Award, does set maximums for some categories in an effort to encourage physicians to participate in multiple modes of learning in order to further enhance their professional development.

26. What if my state licensing board places a limit on the number of credits for teaching medical students or residents that can be used for license renewal?

Each entity that requires physicians to obtain CME credit can stipulate what will be accepted to meet that requirement. While the AMA doesn't place a limit on the number of credits that a physician can earn under any format, we do understand that there are state licensing board, certifying board, and other regulations that physicians need to take into account.

As an example, the AMA, for the purpose of qualifying for the Physician's Recognition Award, does set maximums for some categories, i.e., physicians are limited to using 10 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* obtained for teaching at live *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities per year of the award. These limits are in place to encourage physicians to participate in multiple modes of learning in order to further enhance their professional development. For a full list of the categories and limits per category, please see page 12 of the [AMA PRA booklet](#).

For specific information on what limits your state licensing board may have in place, please contact the licensing board directly.

27. During the pilot for learning associated with teaching medical students and residents, the emphasis was on preparing for teaching by literature searching, cases, etc., but the [AMA website](#) references other types of teaching. Is all time spent teaching included? Does it include the time a student is with the preceptor in the office seeing patients?

The emphasis is the same. The phrase "preparation and teaching" means that the learning is taking place in the preparation stage for the purpose of teaching. Neither preparation nor teaching, by itself, is sufficient for the purpose of claiming CME credit. The time spent with the student, utilizing what they (the faculty) learned, is the metric used for determining credit. If the physician does not prepare to teach, and therefore does not learn anything, spending time with students or residents by itself is not sufficient to receive credit. Bottom line, if there is no learning that can be identified in the preparation stage, there is no credit for spending time with students or residents. This is similar to the concept of CME credit for faculty at *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* activities that has been in place for CME providers since 2006.

As an example, let's say a physician has students and/or residents in his or her office and sets some time aside for discussion of a topic related to a special interest on the part of the student, or to a patient seen at a previous visit. If the physician spends time preparing for that conversation by researching the topic and learns in the process, then the physician can claim credit under this new guidance for the time spent discussing that with the student/resident. Physicians may not claim credit for students following them around and observing for several hours, or for providing the students with feedback on the way to conduct an interview or perform a part of the physical exam if it is all based on accumulated experience over the years.

28. Can you provide examples of how to calculate credit for the learning associated with teaching medical students and residents?

There are two steps needed for physicians to claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for learning associated with teaching medical students and residents. The first step is that there must be learning involved in the preparation for teaching (although preparation time is not included when calculating the number of credits). The second step is for physicians to document the time spent teaching, using what was learned in the preparation phase. Credit is then calculated based on a 2-1 ratio of the time the physician spends teaching in the second step. Here are some examples:

- a. A physician prepares a one-hour lecture for a group of residents. This is the first time this lecture will be given, and the physician does some research and other learning in order to prepare the lecture. The physician may claim two *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* because one hour was spent teaching residents based on the learning that took place.

- b. A physician has a one-hour session with a resident to teach how to appropriately perform a physical exam, and will give feedback to the resident after observing the resident in action. The faculty member has taught how to perform the physical exam many times, and doesn't need to do any additional preparation for that part of the session, but seeks out information about effective methods for giving feedback. The physician then spends 15 minutes of the one-hour session giving feedback to the resident. The physician may claim 0.5 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* because .25 hours was spent providing feedback to the resident using the tools and techniques learned in preparation for the activity.
- c. A physician teaches students how to perform a procedure, and has done so many times in the past. The faculty member does not need to do any additional preparation this time around, and is able to handle all of the student questions based on accumulated experience over the years. As there was no additional learning involved on the part of the faculty member, it would not be appropriate to claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* in this instance.

29. May physicians claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for teaching medical students and residents directly from the AMA?

No, physicians may not claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for teaching medical students and residents directly from the AMA. This type of live activity must be certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider.

Learning formats: Enduring materials

30. Are faculty eligible for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for enduring materials?

No. The AMA has not approved the awarding of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for serving as faculty/author for enduring materials. A physician may choose to claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for other types of teaching or for medical writing if he/she determines that it meets the requirements. See the [AMA PRA booklet](#) for more information on *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

Learning formats: Journal-based CME

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

Yes, a physician may obtain *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for reading a peer-reviewed article, but only if the article has been planned as a learning activity and certified for credit by an accredited CME provider prior to publication.

32. Can a physician obtain credit for reading articles that have not been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* in advance of publication?

For articles that have not been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by an accredited CME provider, physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* if they individually determine that it meets the requirements. Please refer to information on *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for more information.

Learning formats: PI CME

33. What is a clinical performance measure?

"A clinical performance measure is a mechanism that enables the user to quantify the quality of a selected aspect of care by comparing it to a criterion" (Institute of Medicine, 2000). However, not all performance measures used in PI CME need be clinical in nature. They may also address the structure, processes, or outcomes of the clinical setting (physician practice, hospital, etc.) with direct implications for patient care.

34. What are "evidence-based" performance measures?

Evidence-based medicine is "the integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values." (Sackett DL, Strauss SE, Richardson WS, et al. *Evidence-based medicine: How to practice and teach EBM*. Second edition. London: Churchill Livingstone; 2000). Evidence-based performance measures are those that are developed by adhering to the best research evidence, clinical expertise in the case of a clinical measure, and patient values.

35. What type of background information is required to enable physicians to identify the performance measures for a PI CME activity?

The AMA has maintained the format-specific requirements for performance improvement CME activities, or PI CME, that are contained in their entirety in the “Certification of activities for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by accredited CME providers” section of the updated AMA PRA booklet. It is up to the provider to identify appropriate performance measures that are relevant to the practice of the physician learners and to have in place an oversight mechanism that assures content integrity of the selected performance measures.

36. Can a physician start a PI CME activity during Stage B or Stage C?

No. Physicians must start a PI CME activity with Stage A. This ensures that a physician has done an assessment of his/her practice to determine the baseline performance that will be reassessed in Stage C. However, there may be times when a PI CME activity will be extended beyond one cycle; please see question 38.

37. What is meant by “validate the depth of physician participation” in a PI CME activity?

For any certified CME activity, an accredited CME provider has a process in place to determine who participated in the activity to appropriately award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. PI CME is no different, and a provider needs to know whether the physician engaged in the activity in the expected ways in all three Stages (A, B and C).

38. If a physician completes a PI CME activity but determines that there is still room for improvement based on the data gathered in Stage C, can they extend the PI CME activity and earn additional credit?

Yes. In reviewing Stage C data a physician may determine that there is still further room for improvement that needs to be addressed. The Stage C data already collected would be used as Stage A data for the next cycle. In this situation, the physician has already been awarded credit for Stage C so it would not be appropriate to receive credit for Stage A in the second cycle. Different intervention(s) would be utilized in the second Stage B, and another Stage C would be completed after an appropriate interval. A maximum of 10 credits (for Stages B and C) could be awarded for the second cycle of the PI CME activity.

39. Can just one physician participate in an activity, or does it have to be done in groups?

PI CME activities can be done by individual physicians or a group. Often, the involvement of other members of the health care team or physician’s practice will be necessary or indispensable to the success of the PI CME activity.

40. How does a physician get credit for working on a performance improvement initiative?

PI CME must be structured through an accredited CME provider prior to beginning the activity. A physician may not come to the accredited provider and ask to be awarded credit for doing a performance improvement initiative after the fact. However, a performance improvement activity being planned by an institution may very well meet the requirements to being certified as a PI CME activity prior to it being initiated.

Designating and awarding credit

41. Does the AMA place a limit on the amount of time physicians have to claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* after participation in an educational activity?

The AMA does not set a limit on the amount of time accredited CME providers can give physicians to claim credit for an activity. The accredited CME provider has the authority to set a limit, but if you do physicians should be made aware of what the time limit is prior to participation in the activity.

42. Are there limits to the amount of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* that physicians can earn during a year for specific learning formats, such as “Journal-based CME” or “Manuscript review”?

No. The AMA places no limits on the amount of CME credit a physician may earn in any format. There are limits to the number of CME credits that may be reported from some of the learning format categories when using the credit earned to apply for the AMA Physician’s Recognition Award. These limits may be found in the [AMA PRA booklet](#).

Other organizations that require CME credits for membership, recredentialing, relicensure, recertification or Maintenance of Certification, etc., may choose to limit the number of credits obtained through a particular format.

Documentation requirements

43. How are CME credits tracked for physicians?

There is no centralized tracking of AMA PRA credits. Each accredited CME provider is required to keep records of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* claimed by physicians who participate in their activities for six years from the date of completion of the activity. Because credits may be obtained from a variety of accredited CME providers, physicians should maintain a record of their CME credits from all sources.

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ is not awarded by accredited CME providers or by the AMA. Physicians self-designate and document participation in activities that may qualify for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

Physicians should keep in mind the credit requirements of various entities when deciding how long to keep records of their CME activities. Licensing boards, medical specialty certifying boards, hospital medical staff and other may have different reporting requirements.

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

Accredited CME providers are required to make available documentation of credits claimed by physicians at their request, but there is no requirement for a specific type of documentation to be used. Many accredited CME providers will issue a credit certificate at the completion of an activity, or provide a transcript of CME credits claimed over a period of time. Whatever form it takes, the documentation provided should include: physician's name, name of the accredited CME provider, title of activity, learning format of the activity, date(s) of live activity or date that physician completed the activity, and number of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* awarded.

These records of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* claimed by physician participants must be maintained by the accredited CME provider for a minimum of six years from the date the activity was completed. Some providers place a limit on the amount of time you have to claim your credit after completing the activity, but once the credit is claimed the records must be kept for six years from the date of the activity.

45. What elements must be included on documentation provided to participating physicians?

Documentation provided to participating physicians must accurately reflect, at a minimum, the following:

- Physician's name
- Name of accredited CME provider
- Title of activity
- Learning format
- Date(s) of live activity or date that physician completed the activity
- Number of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* awarded

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™

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

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ is CME credit that is self-designated and claimed by individual physicians for participation in activities not certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* that:

- Comply with the AMA definition of CME
- Comply with the relevant AMA ethical opinions (at the time of this writing this includes 9.2.6 "Continuing Medical Education", 9.2.7 "Financial Relationships with Industry in Continuing Medical Education," and 9.6.2 "Gifts to Physicians from Industry")

- Are not promotional
- A physician finds to be a worthwhile learning experience related to his/her practice

Examples of learning activities that might meet the requirements for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* include, but are not limited to:

- Teaching residents, medical students or other health professionals
- Unstructured online searching and learning (i.e., not “Internet point-of-care”)
- Reading authoritative medical literature
- Consultation with peers and medical experts
- Small group discussions
- Self-assessment activities
- Medical writing
- Preceptorship participation
- Research
- Peer review and quality assurance participation

A physician must individually assess the educational value for each learning experience in which he or she participates to determine if it is appropriate to claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

AMA definition of CME: CME consists of educational activities which serve to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, and professional performance and relationships that a physician uses to provide services for patients, the public or the profession. The content of CME is the body of knowledge and skills generally recognized and accepted by the profession as within the basic medical sciences, the discipline of clinical medicine and the provision of health care to the public. (HOD policy #300.988)

47. May accredited CME providers certify activities for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*?

No. Providers may not certify any activities for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*, nor may they provide documentation or otherwise indicate to a physician that an activity qualifies for such credit. *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* activities are entirely self-claimed and self-documented by a physician.

Organizations may choose to maintain records of physician participation in activities that have not been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* but, since they may not certify or award such credit, should not record them as *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

48. Does the AMA or an accredited CME provider issue certificates for participation in activities that may qualify for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*?

Physicians are not issued certificates that state they have been awarded *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*. This credit is self-claimed and self-documented by physicians. Organizations may not advertise an activity as meeting the requirements or being eligible for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

49. How do physicians claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*?

The physician should self-claim credit for appropriate *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* activities and document the activity title or description, subject or content area, date(s) of participation and number of credits claimed. Physicians may not claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for an activity that the physician has claimed *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. Each physician is responsible for maintaining a record of their *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

50. How do physicians calculate how much *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* should be claimed?

As with live activities, physicians should claim credit based on their participation time with 60 minutes of participation equal to one (1) *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*; this credit is claimed in 15 minute or 0.25 credit increments, and physicians must round to the nearest quarter hour.

51. What are the requirements for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*?

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ is self-designated and claimed by individual physicians for participation in activities not certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* that:

- Comply with the AMA definition of CME
- Comply with the relevant AMA ethical opinions (at the time of this writing this includes 6.2.6 “Continuing Medical Education,” 9.2.7 “Financial Relationships with Industry in CME,” and 9.6.2 “Gifts to Physicians from Industry”)
- Are not promotional
- A physician finds to be a worthwhile learning experience related to his/her practice

52. What activities may a physician claim for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*?

AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™ is self-designated and claimed by individual physicians for participation in activities not certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* that:

- Comply with the AMA definition of CME
- Comply with the relevant AMA ethical opinions (at the time of this writing this includes 9.2.6 “Continuing Medical Education,” 9.2.7 “Financial Relationships with Industry in CME,” and 9.6.2 “Gifts to Physicians from Industry”)
- Are not promotional
- A physician finds to be a worthwhile learning experience related to his/her practice

Examples of learning activities that might meet the requirements for *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* include, but are not limited to:

- Participation in activities that have not been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*
- Teaching physicians, residents, medical students or other health professionals
- Unstructured online searching and learning (i.e., not “Internet point-of-care”)
- Reading authoritative medical literature
- Consultation with peers and medical experts
- Small group discussions
- Self-assessment activities
- Medical writing
- Preceptorship participation
- Research
- Peer review and quality assurance participation

A physician must individually assess the educational value for each learning experience in which he or she participates to determine if it is appropriate to claim *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™*.

Direct credit

53. What are direct credit activities?

The AMA awards credit directly to physicians for participation in certain activities that have not been developed by an accredited CME provider but that the AMA Council on Medical Education has judged to be valuable learning experiences. These include:

- Preparing and presenting an original presentation at a live activity that has been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* (if the accredited CME provider has not already awarded credit for this)
- Publishing, as the lead author (first listed), a peer-reviewed article in a journal indexed in the MEDLINE bibliographic database
- Preparing a poster presentation, as the first author, which is included in the published abstracts, at a live activity that is certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*
- Obtaining a medically-related advanced degree, such as a master's in public health
- Successful completion of an ABMS member board certification or maintenance of certification process.
- Successful participation in an ACGME accredited residency or fellowship program

With the exception of faculty credit, accredited CME providers must not award *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* to physicians for these types of activities; the physician must apply directly to the AMA to be awarded credit for these activities. More [information about direct credit](#) can be found on the AMA website.

54. How does a physician claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* directly from the AMA?

Physicians may claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* directly from the AMA for the learning that occurs in the following activities approved by the AMA Council on Medical Education:

- **Teaching in live CME activities**
Credit may only be claimed for preparing and presenting an original presentation at a live activity that has been certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* (if the physician did not claim credit from the accredited CME provider for the activity). See question 15.
- **Publishing articles**
Publishing, as a lead author (first listed), a peer-reviewed article in a journal included in the MEDLINE bibliographic database. See question 55.
- **Poster presentations**
Preparing a poster presentation, as the first author, which is included in the published abstracts, at an activity certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*.
- **Medically related advanced degrees**
Obtaining a medically related advanced degree, such as a master's in public health (not available if the academic program certified individual courses for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*).
- **American Board of Medical Specialty (ABMS) member board certification and Maintenance of Certification (MOC®)**
Successfully completing an ABMS board certification or MOC process. See question 57.
- **Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredited education**
Successfully participating in an ACGME-accredited residency or fellowship program. See question 56.

To claim the credit physicians must submit to the AMA a copy of the completed Direct Credit Application or Resident Credit Application, along with the required documentation and appropriate processing fee. Complete instructions are found on the [AMA website](#).

55. When there are multiple authors of a peer-reviewed article in a journal included in the MEDLINE bibliographic database, which author can claim the AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™?

Only the author listed first can claim *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for publishing a peer-reviewed article in a journal included in the MEDLINE bibliographic database.

56. Can a physician get CME credit for successful participation in a residency or fellowship program?

Yes; physicians have two choices for obtaining a CME benefit for residencies and fellowships accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME):

- a. A resident/fellow can receive a standard one, two or three-year AMA Physician's Recognition Award (PRA); each year of completed training is accepted for one year of the AMA PRA (up to three years), and/or
- b. A resident/fellow can claim twenty (20) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* per year for participating in an ACGME-accredited residency and/or fellowship program.

To obtain the PRA and/or *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for participating in a residency/fellowship program, the physician must claim this directly from the AMA by accessing the Resident Credit Application on the [AMA website](#).

57. Can a physician get credit for certification, recertification or maintenance of certification (MOC®) with an ABMS member specialty board?

Yes; physicians have two choices for obtaining a CME benefit for certification or MOC with an ABMS member specialty board:

- a. A physician can receive a standard three-year AMA Physician's Recognition Award (PRA) for completing an ABMS member board certification or recertification process, and/or
- b. A physician can claim sixty (60) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for successfully completing an ABMS board certification or recertification process dated Sept. 1, 2010 or later. Physicians can claim twenty-five (25) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* for certifications dated prior to Sept. 1, 2010.

To obtain credit for ABMS certification, the physician must apply directly to the AMA by completing (a) the AMA PRA application to receive the AMA PRA or (b) the Direct Credit Application to receive a credit certificate. Physicians are responsible for ensuring that their board is a member-board of the [ABMS](#). Complete instructions, including substantiating documentation requirements and processing fees, are found on the [AMA website](#).

International activities

58. How can physicians earn AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ for attending international conferences?

Physicians may earn *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* for international conferences in the following circumstances:

- a. The activity is certified for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* by a U.S.-based CME provider accredited by the ACCME or an ACCME-recognized state medical society.
- b. The CME activity is recognized through the AMA's International Conference Recognition Program. [More information](#) can be found on the AMA website.
- c. The CME activity (live or e-learning) is approved by the European Union of Medical Specialists' (UEMS) European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME®) for European CME Credits (ECMEC®s), and posted in the EACCME® section of the UEMS website. Physicians can apply to the AMA to have the ECMEC®s converted to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. [More information](#) about the AMA agreement with the UEMS can be found on the AMA website.
- d. The CME activity is certified for Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada MOC Credit by CPD providers accredited by the Royal College, and is a Section 1 or Section 3 activity covered by the AMA agreement with the Royal College. Physicians can apply to the AMA to have this credit converted to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. [Information](#) about the covered categories can be found on the AMA website.

e. The CME activity is certified for Qatar Council for Healthcare practitioners (QCHP) CPD credit by CPD providers accredited by the QCHP or by the QCHP directly, and is a Category 1 or Category 3 activity covered by the AMA agreement with the QCHP. Physicians can apply to the AMA to have QCHP hours of participation converted to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*. [Information](#) about the covered categories can be found on the AMA website.

Physicians attending international CME activities that do not fall into one of the above categories may self-claim and document *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for their participation provided the activity meets the AMA definition of CME, complies with the relevant AMA ethical opinions, is not promotional in nature, and is relevant to the physician's practice. See the section on *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for more information.

59. If physicians attend a conference outside the U.S. or its territories that is accredited by the European Union for Medical Specialists' (UEMS) European Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (EACCME®) and receive a certificate for European CME Credits (ECMEC®s), how do they convert this to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

In order to convert UEMS-EACCME® ECMEC®s to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*, the physician must apply to the AMA by completing the Application for EACCME Credit Conversion and submitting, (1) a copy of the UEMS-EACCME® ECMEC® certificate and (2) the appropriate processing fee. A certificate of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* will be emailed within four weeks. For other specific questions, please contact pra@ama-assn.org.

For more information on the AMA agreement with the UEMS and to access the application, visit the [AMA website](#).

In order to have the credit converted, the activity must appear on the list of approved activities posted in the EACCME® section of the UEMS website for live and e-learning activities. [More information](#) about the AMA/UEMS agreement can be found on the AMA website.

60. If physicians attend a conference certified for Royal College MOC Credit, how do they convert this credit to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

In order to convert Royal College MOC Credit to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*, the physician must apply to the AMA by completing the Application for Royal College Credit Conversion and submitting, (1) a copy of the Royal College credit certificate and (2) the appropriate processing fee. A certificate of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* will be emailed within four weeks. For other specific questions, please contact pra@ama-assn.org.

For more information on the AMA agreement with the UEMS and to access the application, visit the [AMA website](#).

In order to have the credit converted, the category of activity must be included in the AMA agreement with the Royal College. [More information](#) can be found on the AMA website.

61. If physicians receive a certificate for hours of participation in a conference certified for Qatar Council for Healthcare Practitioners (QCHP) CPD credit, how do they convert the hours of participation to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*?

In order to convert QCHP CPD credit to *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*, the physician must apply to the AMA by completing the Application for QCHP CPD Credit Conversion and submitting, (1) a copy of the ACHP CPD credit certificate and (2) the appropriate processing fee. A certificate of *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* will be emailed within four weeks. For other specific questions, please contact pra@ama-assn.org.

For more information on the AMA agreement with the UEMS and to access the application, visit the [AMA website](#).

In order to have the credit converted, the category of activity must be included in the AMA agreement with the QCHP. [More information](#) can be found on the AMA website.

AMA Physician's Recognition Award (PRA)

62. What is the AMA Physician's Recognition Award?

The AMA [Physician's Recognition Award \(PRA\)](#) is an award issued by the AMA since 1968 to physicians who have met certain CME requirements. It recognizes physicians who have demonstrated their commitment to staying current with advances in medicine by participating in CME activities.

More information about the AMA PRA, including eligibility requirements and access to the application, can be found on the [AMA website](#).

63. What are the requirements for the AMA Physician's Recognition Award?

The AMA offers one-, two- and three-year AMA PRAs. The requirements for each are as follows:

One-year award

- Twenty (20) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* and thirty (30) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* or *AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™* (50 credits total)
- Or one year ACGME residency/fellowship training

Two-year award

- Forty (40) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* and sixty (60) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* or *AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™* (100 credits total)
- Or two years ACGME residency/fellowship training

Three-year award

- Sixty (60) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* and ninety (90) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* or *AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™* (150 credits total)
- Or three years ACGME residency/fellowship training
- Or ABMS board certification or MOC

The AMA requires that at least half of the credit applied toward the AMA PRA be within the physician's specialty or area of practice. Ethics, office management and physician-patient communication can serve as appropriate topics for CME, but are not considered specialty specific education.

64. What are the requirements for the AMA Physician's Recognition Award with Commendation?

The AMA PRA with commendation is available for physicians who meet the following requirements:

One-year award with commendation

- Sixty (60) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* and thirty (30) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* or *AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™* (90 credits total)

Two-year award with commendation

- One hundred and twenty (120) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* and sixty (60) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* or *AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™* (180 credits total)

Three-year award with commendation

- One hundred and eighty (180) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* and ninety (90) *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* or *AMA PRA Category 2 Credits™* (270 credits total)

The AMA requires that at least half of the credit applied toward the AMA PRA be within the physician's specialty or area of practice. Ethics, office management and physician-patient communication can serve as appropriate topics for CME, but are not considered specialty specific education.

65. Can other types of credit be used when applying for the AMA Physician's Recognition Award?

For the purpose of obtaining an AMA PRA physician may submit credits earned within the following CME systems on a one-to-one basis for *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™*:

- American Academy of Family Physicians' prescribed credit
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' formal learning cognates

American Osteopathic Association credits may be claimed as *AMA PRA Category 2 Credit™* for the purpose of obtaining the Physician's Recognition Award.