Needs Assessments

A needs assessment is a systematic inquiry into your target audience's current knowledge, abilities, and/or interests in a given topic or area of practice. It could be an inventory of programs already offered and an assessment of level of interest in those planned. A carefully conducted needs assessment allows educational planners to respond to documented needs and gaps, to determine how to improve the relevance and impact of planned programs, to maximize their investment in educational programming or to collect outcomes to assist in grant development.

There are many ways to perform a needs assessment including surveys, focus groups, interviewing thought leaders, and more. Careful scrutiny of evaluations and comments from earlier CME programs will also be very helpful in selecting topics and speakers for your programs.

A needs assessment is essential to ensure that the CME sessions you plan will actually meet your staff and/or members' needs, and/or draw an audience.

Learning Objectives

Writing Effective Learning Objectives

Learning objectives should use action verbs and should reflect measurable outcomes (via demonstration or post-testing). Examples of some action verbs are: conduct, demonstrate, describe, discuss, evaluate, examine, identify, initiate, list, name, review, recognize. The word "understand" should never be used in a learning objective because it is not measurable. In general, learning objectives should complete the sentence, "At the conclusion of this session, the learner will be able to…"

Sample Learning Objectives
Managed Care Trends: Focus on the Future
1. Discuss characteristics that make a practice attractive to a managed care network
2. Describe how to educate supervising physicians or practice administrators about PA contributions to an effective managed care practice
3. Educate contract negotiators in their practice so that PAs are appropriately included when managed care contracts are signed
4. Explain financing/payment mechanisms of managed care, such as capitation and discounted fee-for-service

Osteoporosis: Turning Clinical Pitfalls into Clinical Pearls
1. Recognize the clinical features and complications of osteoporosis
2. Describe bone differentiation and microarchitecture
3. Identify new guidelines for prevention & treatment of osteoporosis (both primary and secondary, e.g. glucocorticoid-induced) via pharmacologic therapy
4. Interpret bone mineral density results
5. Discriminate therapy choices which provide fast fracture protection