CME Activity Planner's Guide

Identifying Practice Gaps and Developing Learning Objectives

1. Understanding Practice Gaps

A practice gap is the difference between current practice and best practice. It identifies what the target audience is not doing, not doing correctly, or not doing consistently, which can be improved through education.

Types of Practice Gaps

- Knowledge: Lack of awareness or familiarity with information.
- Competence: Lack of ability to apply knowledge in practice.
- Performance: Failure to implement appropriate action or behavior.
- System-level: Gaps from institutional or systemic barriers.

How to Identify Practice Gaps

- Chart reviews, QI data, peer reviews.
- Morbidity & Mortality reports.
- New clinical guidelines or research.
- Surveys or focus groups.
- Expert opinion or faculty feedback.

2. Writing Practice Gap Statements

A well-written gap statement clearly states what the audience currently does and what they should be doing. Use this format:

'Physicians are currently [current practice], whereas evidence-based guidelines recommend [best practice].'

Example: 'Emergency physicians often delay ordering coccidioidomycosis serologies in patients with respiratory symptoms, whereas early testing is recommended by regional guidelines.'

3. Developing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives describe what learners will be able to do after the CME activity. They should be specific, measurable, and based on Bloom's Taxonomy.
Start with: 'At the conclusion of this activity, participants should be able to...'

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Examples of Strong Objectives

- Describe the epidemiology of Valley Fever in Kern County. (Knowledge)

- Explain the mechanism of immune checkpoint inhibitors. (Comprehension)

- Demonstrate appropriate use of sepsis screening tools. (Application)

- Differentiate between bacterial and fungal pneumonias. (Analysis)

- Assess the appropriateness of opioid tapering strategies. (Evaluation)

Avoid Weak Verbs

- Understand, know, be aware of, learn about.

4. Linking Gaps to Objectives

Each learning objective should directly address an identified practice gap.

Example:

Gap: 'Physicians are not ordering Valley Fever testing early enough.'

Objective: 'Apply diagnostic criteria to determine when to initiate testing for Valley Fever.'

5. Tips for Planners

- Limit to 3-5 objectives per activity.

- Align objectives with speaker content and evaluations.

- Ensure objectives reflect clinical relevance.

- Incorporate cultural competency and implicit bias as required.