

EMCB - CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION PROGRAM BY MEANS OF THE INTERNET FOR THE BUCHAREST COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS. THE COLLABORATION OF EMCB - TIMISOARA MEDICAL JOURNAL

Tiberiu Staniea

Continuing medical education is a Hippocratic requirement, addressed to all physicians, so that they can keep informed every moment of the day about the medical knowledge in their realm of activity, for the direct benefit of their patients. Up to the present day the main method by which physicians have kept informed was their participation to courses, congresses, symposiums and other scientific activities that called for the physician's attendance in person.

Globally, this process tends to develop more and more by means of the Internet. The advantages of this continuing medical education method are obvious:

- Bringing the continuing medical education process to a European – international level;
- The multimedia approach – CME by Internet becomes comparable to the educational live scientific activities;
- Wide accessibility, regardless of the geographical position;
- Relatively low costs (travel costs and other related payments are no longer needed);
- A wider and wider range of educational materials are continuously available;
- The possibility to download auxiliary materials for didactic procedures.

In USA, CME represents a process that has been developed by AMA (The American Medical

Association) during the last 40 years, a process well integrated into the American medical society. 75% of it takes place currently by/on the Internet. There is no unitary system, acknowledged on a European scale, that might accredit the CME activities. UEMS (The Union of European Experts in Medicine) has established the European Accreditation Council for CME (EACCME) – intended to accomplish the accreditation of these activities and to correlate them with the activities of AMA.

As far as historical data are concerned, the EMCB program (“Educatie Medicala Continua” - Bucharest) was initiated subsequently to the IMSS Conference from March 2002, event that tackled the subject of promoting the medical educational process and CME distance learning in Romania. The elaboration of the program started from the assumption that our institution is in possession of the appropriate human, scientific and technical resources necessary in order to get involved in such a program. The adaptation of a first software variant required for this purpose was initiated the same year. At the same time, the database was loaded with over 100 medical articles, originating from Modern Medicine, the publication of the Bucharest College of Physicians. In addition to the translation and adaptation of the new version, the web programming was set up, which was necessary for: the surveys introductory and validation section, the user's registration and validation section, the results computation and display section.

The program, performed together with the University of Medicine and Pharmacy “Carol Davila” from Bucharest, was elaborated under the guidance of the Scientific Professional Department of the College, which assumed the responsibility to acquire the CME materials (based on the articles published by the

The Research and Communication Centre, The Bucharest College of Physicians Operation Coordinator for the EMCB program - www.emcb.ro

Correspondence to:
Tiberiu Staniea, Coordinator,

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“Medicina Moderna” Magazine), as well as to make the knowledge testing surveys. Between April and June 2004, the program was in its pilot phase, in order to be tested in operational conditions and for the users to become acquainted with it.

By decision number 2190 from the 10th of June 2004, the EMCB program was accredited by the Romanian College of Physicians. On the 1st of July 2004, the program was officially launched, and a first 6 month operational stage was to take place, until the 31st of December 2004. In this stage, the program was available only for the physicians that were members of the Bucharest College of Physicians.

Based on this stage were drawn the conclusions related to the functionality of the program, its promotion and the relation to the subscribed users. Certain software reconfigurations were made and new methods were introduced for the management of the newly included materials and users. The shortcomings established on the first program stage were also removed.

The 1st of July 2005 the second stage of the EMCB program was initiated and it will be in progress until the 31st of December 2005. Just like the first stage, this second one develops on three sections: internal medicine, surgery and other specialties. Two scientific articles are posted each program month, for each of the three sections, and they are accompanied by surveys for knowledge testing. The materials suggested are addressed to all physicians, regardless of their specialty, aiming to increase the medical general culture. At the end of the program, the physicians who approach and answer correctly all the proposed surveys can be granted a maximum score of 36 (CME credits), acknowledged by the Romanian College of Physicians. The whole program develops by means of a dedicated website, <http://www.emcb.ro>.

This last stage brings about two new elements of great interest for the physicians. The first one is the expansion of the program on national level, so that every physician from the Romanian College of

Physicians can subscribe.

The second element resides in the initiation of the collaboration between our institution, by means of the EMCB program, and other continuing medical education providers who are interested in the Internet promotion thereof. Our first partner, TMJ - Timisoara Medical Journal, has to be mentioned in this context. The publication approaches the CME process with the standards and methods we know from the prestigious publications abroad, fact for which we decided to choose it as our first collaborator. Furthermore, the quality of the scientific materials published by TMJ adds to the above facts, as well as the promptitude and reliability of its makers. In the current stage, the collaboration confines to the medical publication features, by posting on EMCB the materials abstracts of TMJ. By means of a link that is near the abstract, the readers can access the full text version on the <http://www.tmj.ro> site.

Subsequently, with the agreement of the parties and of the Romanian College of Physicians, we anticipate a CME scientific material exchange, so that all the physicians, from all over the country, can benefit from the scientific experience and accomplishments of our colleagues in Timisoara.

The collaboration with TMJ is the first one in a long series, by means of which we wish to involve as many teams as possible from Romania, who are interested in promoting the online CME process in the Romanian language. Both by this collaboration and by those to follow, we want to improve the quality of the suggested materials and implicitly the physicians' degree of training. The final aim is to establish with our partners, in the course of time, a common basis of CME on national level and a possible online index of all the Romanian medical publications.

Entrusted that our unity is the key to reaching an appropriate European level of continuing medical education, we thus urge all our colleagues, from all over the country, to join us in this course of action.

We are looking forward to getting in touch.