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Continuing medical education (CME) is a fundamental step in maintaining a high standard of patient care all over the world. In many countries, the World Wide Web represents a new, exciting opportunity – in addition and not in opposition to those obtainable through attendance at medical congresses – to accomplish this fundamental phase of any professional activity.

The joint sponsorship of CME activity between a medical college and a Web society creates a new, easy and feasible opportunity for medical updating. However there are marked differences in the CME credits offered, depending on the different nations' rules. CME credits for medical professionals in the area of headache and pain care are presented in several Web sites.

The goal of this activity is to elucidate the pathophysiology of headache and pain and to discuss the latest advances in diagnosis and management of these syndromes, in order to improve the medical care of patients.

To obtain CME credits online, there are four different phases: the registration process, reading the learning objectives, reading the full text of scientific articles, and responding to test questions. Participants must respond correctly to at least 70% of all questions to receive the CME certificate. Professionals who cannot use online tests as nationally valid CME credits receive a certificate of attendance.

Medscape
<http://www.medscape.com>

The major Web site that offers a free-of-charge opportunity to receive CME credit is Medscape (<http://www.medscape.com>).

During the last months, various issues have been dedicated to headache treatment. I suggest the topic "Migraine, cluster, trigeminal neuralgia and mood disorders": common ground for treatment (<http://www.medscape.com/Medscape/Neurology/TreatmentUpdate/2000/tu.../toc-tu07.htm>).

This topic has been presented by Stephen D. Silberstein and is valid for CME credits until 26 October 2001.

CME credit can also be given for personal study of the reports from a meeting. In this regard, the American Pain Society presented on Medscape the report of its 19th Annual Scientific Meeting, held in Atlanta 2–5 November 2000. The CME program was launched immediately thereafter and is valid until 31 December 2001 at http://www.medscape.com/CNO.../PrintDay.cfm?conference_id=88&day_num=.

This CME credit program may be appreciated by our readers who are interested in the other area covered by our journal, i.e. pain. The program includes: Observations on neuropathic pain (Bruce Nicholson); A rational polypharmacy for a complex phenomenon (Zahid H. Bajwa); Implementing the Joint Commission of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) pain management standards (June L. Dahl); and Pain assessment across the life span – Psychosocial aspects of chronic pain (Patricia Bruckental).

I believe that both these CME programs will be of interest to our readers involved in headache and/or pain management.

Despite the different rules for CME in various countries, the best opportunity for providing CME credits to physicians is joint sponsorship by medical colleges and national and/or international scientific societies dedicated to the specific scientific argument: headache and pain in our case. This activity should be carried out and presented throughout the groups' own Web sites.