Dedication to continuing medical education (CME) is a central tenet of the American College of Cardiology (ACC). The College is the primary educational source for professionals in cardiovascular medicine, with offerings as varied as the journal you are now reading, educational programs on CD-ROM, and the Annual Scientific Session. In a recent needs assessment survey, however, ACC members clearly stated that “they want it their way;” in other words, our members want personalized CME. There simply is no time for cardiovascular professionals to wade through the vast amounts of educational materials that are presented almost hourly.

To address this need, we have established a task force, chaired by Dr. Rick Nishimura, that will focus on the ways in which the College can deliver personalized CME. The Task Force on Strategic Directions for Continuing Medical Education at the American College of Cardiology will generate new ideas that can be operationalized. The following ideas are under consideration:

- CME that links practice guidelines, performance measures and physician data to enable individual physicians to understand their own performance in context and, if necessary, to improve;
- Further recognizing the value of committee service to the College with CME credit, where possible;
- Offering CME credit for efforts related to seeking consultation on patients;
- Helping members to obtain CME via the Internet and keeping track of their time used to do so; and
- Becoming the Internet source for cardiovascular CME, and possibly using new technology to interpret voice-to-word offerings, such as symposia from the Annual Scientific Session and other currently lecture-based courses.

The College continues to make strides toward more interactive, individual-focused educational programming in all areas. Two new programs have been designed to enable attendees to measure their own progress and to actively participate in programming as it occurs. First, the brand-new ACC/Society for Cardiac Angiography and Interventions Board Review Program in Interventional Cardiology will be held August 26–29 in San Francisco, California, and again October 14–17 in Atlanta, Georgia. Drs. George W. Vetrovec and Morton J. Kern will direct this program using the American Board of Internal Medicine examination guidelines as the basis for updates on basic science, pharmacology, imaging and procedural selection and techniques.

The other program is the recently revised ACC Cardiovascular Board Review Program, which will debut September 13–18 in Chicago, Illinois. Dr. Shahbudin H. Rahimtoola will direct this program with two associate directors, Drs. Kim A. Eagle and Patrick T. O’Gara. They have developed a core curriculum that offers a comprehensive review of the latest findings in disease management and treatment strategies.

Both of these programs have been designed in response to specific feedback from ACC members. These two Board Review programs will provide more participant interaction than the College has ever offered in similar forums. In addition to lectures by experts, the programs will feature discussions, self-assessment exercises and question-and-answer booklets with Board-style questions. These tools, as well as a state-of-the-art audience-response system, will enable participants to evaluate their progress and review their responses relative to their peers. All of these innovations have been designed to help attendees focus their attention on the areas where they need it most.

As the new Board Review programs illustrate, learner control is the hallmark of personalized CME. Computer-based learning, whether via the Internet, CD-ROM or other formats, lends itself to this style of learning. Another promising possibility the new ACC task force plans to explore is “cyber-sessions.” These online programs allow a lecturer to reach learners anywhere in the world by giving a short didactic presentation over the Internet. Participants then interact by typing comments in a chat box.

Of course, the ACC will still offer “traditional” CME programs. These programs are the bedrock of our educational mission, and their formats have always leaned toward small class size and interactive opportunities. For example, the Learning Center, still the “heart” of Heart House, continues to demonstrate the enormous value of educational interaction and face-to-face meetings among colleagues. Our goal is to expand your educational options, not to limit them. Our new emphasis on personalized CME will make the ACC an even more effective partner.
in CME. I hope you will join us as we explore this new frontier in learning. I welcome your input; please contact me about this or other issues by writing or faxing me at Heart House, or by sending e-mail to: pres@acc.org.

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