Pediatricians’ attitudes toward live and online continuing medical education: Results from a national survey, 2017

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Background: Continuing medical education (CME) is an important way for pediatricians to develop and increase their medical knowledge and skills. However, little is known about pediatricians’ attitudes toward live and online CME.

Objectives: To examine pediatrician attitudes toward and experiences with live and online CME and to compare participation barriers and motivating factors for participation by CME format.

Methods: Data were collected in 2017 from a nationally representative sample of US non-retired American Academy of Pediatrics members through the Periodic Survey of Fellows (n=508; response rate=45%). Residents were excluded from analysis. The survey collected information on respondents’ CME format preferences, satisfaction with CME opportunities, as well as barriers to and motivating factors for participation. McNemar tests examined differences in barriers and motivating factors for live and online CME.

Results: Overall, 29% of pediatricians reported a preference for live/in-person CME and 26% preferred online/distance learning, while 39% preferred both equally and 7% had no preference. On average, pediatricians reported that 54% of their total CME participation per year comes from online/distance learning, while 42% comes from live/in-person CME. Over 6 in 10 (61%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with access to live/in-person opportunities, compared to 75% for online/distance learning.

The top reported barrier to participation for both live and online CME was the amount of time required to participate (73% and 38% respectively, p<.001), followed by family commitments (59% and 31% respectively, p<.001; see Figure 1). Flexibility to participate on their own time was the top motivating factor for online CME, while this was the least reported motivating factor for live CME (88% and 46% respectively, p<.001). Opportunities to network with other pediatricians and interact with experts were commonly reported motivating factors for live CME, but were much less likely to be reported for online CME (see Figure 2).

Conclusion: Although pediatricians are less likely to report barriers to participating in online CME, in-person events still appeal to pediatricians and offer unique opportunities, making both formats important to pediatricians.
Figure 1: Barriers to CME Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Live/In-person CME</th>
<th>Online/Distance Learning CME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The amount of time required to participate in CME*</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family commitments*</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting time off work*</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall cost of participating in CME*</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of topics relevant to my practice*</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of perceived educational value</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P < .001

Figure 2: Motivating Factors for CME Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Live/In-person CME</th>
<th>Online/Distance Learning CME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility to participate in CME on your own time***</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for CME credit***</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous experience with similar courses*</td>
<td>72.7</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment that matches your learning style</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting aside time to concentrate on CME**</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation of sponsoring institution**</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makeup of program faculty***</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to interact with experts in your field***</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to network with other pediatricians***</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P < .05; **P < .01; ***P < .001