*Leading article***CME – Certification by the European Board of Gastroenterology**

The European Board of Gastroenterology, which is already awarding a European Diploma for training in gastroenterology¹ has now issued criteria for its own certificate for CME in Gastroenterology (appended).

Firstly, like the European Diploma, the European CME Certificate has been firmly linked with National Certification within the member states. Secondly, these National Criteria have to meet the European Criteria, for European Certification to be granted on proof of National Certification. It is expected that this will have the double effect of (a) focusing those national organisations responsible for CME to ensure that their criteria are at least up to the minimum requirement set by Europe and (b) avoiding duplication of bureaucracy.

It is probable that this will have some impact – hopefully beneficial. It is noticeable that, while many member states fiercely declare their independence as far as accreditation is concerned (and indeed are protected in this respect by the European Community, which has declared all member states professional qualifications to be acceptable across the Community) most states are moving surprisingly fast to fall in line with training conditions required for the European Diploma in Gastroenterology.

This has, in particular, led to the incorporation of general (internal) medicine as a compulsory element of specialist training in several countries where this was not already the case, to the general acceptance of the principle (if not yet the practice) of training in ultrasound for gastroenterologists, and to the institution of external assessment of training programmes in the countries (the majority) where no such assessment was previously made. The overall effect of these changes is likely to be a considerable rise in the general standard of training across Europe.

The European Criteria for CME in Gastroenterology should be easy for UK gastroenterologists to achieve. In terms of total hours they are considerably less than the Royal College of Physicians requirements (50 hours/year at present, rising shortly to 100 hours/year) but they are more specific. In particular, organisers of educational meetings will need to evaluate their meetings and take care to ensure appropriate independence from commercial sponsors. The criteria will also encourage gastroenterologists to participate at a local level in undergraduate or post-graduate teaching and in multidisciplinary meetings. Not all UK gastroenterologists attend such meetings as

regularly as they might and such meetings are often lacking altogether in situations where specialty medicine is largely clinic based.

Overall, the criteria for CME laid down by the EBG should, like the European Diploma, have a beneficial effect on the standard of gastroenterology across Europe without any significant increase in bureaucracy.

Criteria for CME Certification by the European Gastroenterology Board

Each of the Specialist Sections of the European Union of Medical Specialists has set up a Specialist Board whose mandate includes not only the encouragement and maintenance of good standards of training but also the stimulation and coordination of continuing education after training is completed.

To quote from the Charter on Continuing Medical Education of Medical Specialists (Harmonization Committee, UEMS, June 1994):

'This includes the provision of advice and stimulation, at a European level, in relation to:

- Setting of standards
- Assessment and Accreditation
- Quality assurance
- Safeguarding financial independence
- European coordination of programmes.'

The European Gastroenterology Board has decided that this stimulation can best be achieved by offering a Certificate of Continued Education in Gastroenterology, to be awardable every five years to all European gastroenterologists (who may not necessarily hold the European Diploma of Gastroenterology) in respect of their continued training over the five year period.

It was unanimously felt by the Board that the criteria for this Certificate should include not just the quantity but also the quality of the continued education. To achieve this the criteria include a comparatively short but very closely defined period of rigorously evaluated teaching. It is expected that the evaluation of CME will be conducted at a national level. Providing the national criteria meet the minimum criteria as defined in this document, European Gastroenterology Board certification will be automatic on production of evidence that the applicant has obtained national CME certification.

Criteria for Certification in Continued Medical Education by the European Gastroenterology Board

Two components are required:

(A) Organised, evaluated courses and 'state of the art' lectures: minimum six hours/year

Organisers of these courses and lectures will need to apply in advance to their National Society (or to the European Gastroenterology Board in the case of European Meetings) giving proof of:

(i) A clear statement of the educational objectives of the course/lecture

(ii) Evidence of evaluation of quality of teaching (for example, by questionnaire to attendees or reports from independent observers, or both)

(iii) Acceptable standards for commercial support. (Commercial supporters shall not control the planning or content of the educational activity).

(B) Non-evaluated learning: minimum 40 hours/year
This may comprise any of:

Teaching (undergraduate and postgraduate)

Locally organised educational meetings

Audit meetings

Journal Review meetings

Attendance at international/national/regional meetings that do not meet the criteria for category (a)

Interactive computer education

Publications in peer reviewed journals (10 hours/paper) or two hours per peer reviewed first author abstract presented at a national or international meeting.

Not more than 10 hours will be allowed for each category.

Category A CME in excess of six hours per year may contribute to up to 10 hours in category B.

Organisers of educational meetings are urged to identify the number of credit hours available when advertising these meetings. This scheme is now in place so that the first five year CME certificates will be available in the year 2000.

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1 European Board of Gastroenterology. Specialist training in gastroenterology in the European Community: the case for European Boards. *Gut* 1994; 35: 135-8.