

## Continuing Education and the ACP

I HAVE been fortunate in my academic career to have been able to do a fair amount of professional speaking, primarily in the Continuing Dental Education (CDE) venue. My current and former deans, and the department chairs I have served under, have been supportive of this effort, and I feel strongly that providing quality CDE is part of the teaching mission of our university, i.e., to provide quality education. The CDE courses are generally at a much higher level than that of predoctoral teaching, as they should be. They should be, after all, the highest form of postdoctoral education. Given the requirements for CDE that most states require annually, we have seen an eruption of continuing education courses emerge on the national and international markets over the past decade. How, then, does the astute practitioner select appropriate CDE courses, and how do you know where your hard-earned dollars are best invested in the highest-quality CDE? One such way is by taking courses recognized via the Continuing Education Recognition Program (CERP) of the American Dental Association (ADA).

The ADA established the CERP program in 1993. Through an application and review process, the ADA CERP committee evaluates and recognizes institutions and organizations that provide CDE. ADA CERP is administrated by a standing committee of the Council on Dental Education and Licensure that includes representatives of the ADA, the American Association of Dental Examiners, the American Dental Education Association (ADEA), the Canadian Dental Association, and the organizations representing the recognized dental specialties. To apply for recognition, the CE provider must complete the ADA CERP application for recognition, a form relating to each of the 15 standards addressed in

the ADA CERP standards and criteria. The application, together with required documentation or pertinent data, is submitted to the ADA CERP Committee for evaluation. ADA CERP recognition is granted based on a provider's demonstration of eligibility to apply and compliance with ADA CERP recognition standards and procedures. *The ACP is a CERP certified provider of CDE.*

The ADA places several requirements on those providing CDE in order to become "certified" CERP providers. One of these requirements is to survey the course attendees at the conclusion of the program and assess the speakers for clarity, content, presentation style, effectiveness, whether they met the stated objectives of the program, and others. Most CDE providers also compile the results of these surveys, and send the results to the speakers. While sometimes a double-edged sword, these comments, if presented fairly, can give the speaker(s) an insight into how to improve their course for subsequent presentations. If not fairly presented, they can be completely demoralizing, especially to young presenters. I recall two colleagues of mine who received cutting remarks at a CDE program we gave a number of years ago—"this presentation was unspeakably boring" and "this individual should never be allowed to speak outside the School of Dentistry again." Fortunately, both were seasoned speakers who take such comments with a grain of salt, and both bounced back well. Besides, it gave us something to laugh about for decades! Other general comments are also collected about the completed CDE course, and I am always fascinated to read these. Recently, the ACP Center for Prosthodontic Education (CPE) held its "Prosthodontics Update 2005" course in Chicago, and I just received the results from the participant surveys, which I will discuss

later in this editorial. If you are unfamiliar with the ACP's CPE, let me take a moment to enlighten you.

The CPE was developed several years ago as the brain child of Dr. Ken Hilsen, who fought for 2 years to develop and implement the CPE. Its mission is *"to provide the highest quality continuing education programs related to the specialty and discipline of prosthodontics. ACP members, nonmember prosthodontists, dental professionals, technicians, and auxiliaries worldwide will find the CPE to be the source for all their continuing education needs. By offering courses featuring the latest advances in clinical prosthodontics, science, and technology, the CPE will assist dental professionals in keeping up-to-date with the newest advances and innovations in the field of prosthodontics, dental implants, and esthetic dentistry. Through this outreach effort, the CPE strives to promote the specialty of Prosthodontics, and elevate the knowledge and skills of all dental professionals in the discipline of Prosthodontics."*

In the past, the CPE has offered surgical implant training for Prosthodontists at several dental schools, provided several annual review courses in Prosthodontics, presented esthetics courses, and presented courses on complete denture therapy. According to Dr. Richard Jones, CPE Director, this year the CPE will offer two 2-day denture courses, a 3-day review course, two implant surgery courses, an esthetics symposium, and a 1-day prosthodontics symposium at the Chicago Dental Society annual session. What allows the CPE courses to "set the standard" for continuing education? First, the CPE seeks out balanced, evidence-based, and state-of-the-art programs and speakers. Second, the CPE is not hampered by individual CDE providers' personal philosophies or dogmas, by organizational politics, or by predefined themes of various organizations'

annual sessions. And finally, where else can you, as a specialist, get the finest continuing education? If you have not attended a CPE course in the past, give it a try—I believe you will be very satisfied with the results. For a complete listing of the 2006 CPE courses, visit the ACP website at [prosthodontics.org](http://prosthodontics.org) and click on the Continuing Education button on the very top of the page.

Now, back to the survey results. Here are just a few of the comments from the attendees of the 2005 CPE Prosthodontics update course, held in Chicago in November: "incredible review—I don't need a lunch break if this means more lecture time"; "increase the fee and include lunch"; "had a great time—excellent information"; "great education, but overwhelming—too much information to absorb"; and "great organization of the course." The bottom line is that the vast majority of the attendees thoroughly loved the course, and got a ton of information from it. I am a firm believer that we cannot teach to the lowest common denominator—we have to set the bar for CDE as high as possible, and let other continuing education groups try to match it. I believe that the ACP's CPE has done just that, and kudos to those who organized the courses, and to those ACP member speakers who donated their time and talents to make the CDE courses a huge success! We are making a huge impact, one course at a time. Keep up the great work!

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