Dear Editor:

In the commentary titled “A Glossary in Support of Physicians’ Continuing Professional Development across the World,” (Vol. 104, No. 1, pp. 17-22) the authors describe the importance of establishing a common language for continuing medical education (CME) and continuing professional development (CPD) to facilitate greater understanding and the potential for harmonization of standards among CME/CPD accreditors, certifying boards, medical regulatory authorities, and other stakeholders. The creation of this glossary represents a crucial step forward: A common set of terms lays the groundwork for effective communication among these stakeholders, enabling us to work more efficiently together as we collaborate across borders to advance our shared goals of improving physician competence, practice and patient care. As a founding member of the International Academy for CPD Accreditation (IACCPA), we believe that a key responsibility for accreditors and other regulatory bodies is to create connections between nations, systems and professions. Although there are differences in systems within and between nations, there is also a commonality of goals. We support a global approach to CPD that identifies core values while respecting differences.

Clinicians learn best when they are able to choose from a diverse array of activities and formats that are relevant to and meet their needs. At the Accreditation Council for CME (ACCME), we have a long-standing commitment to building substantial equivalency agreements with our colleagues in other countries. These agreements are intended to support the mobility of learners; provide more flexibility, diversity and choice in education; allow clinicians to access accredited educational activities that are recognized by various CPD accreditation systems; and reduce burdens by enabling clinicians to participate in educational activities that meet multiple professional requirements. With this approach to equivalency, accreditors can contribute to motivating clinicians and teams to engage in lifelong learning.

As health care environments continue to rapidly evolve around the world, it becomes increasingly important for accreditors, certifying boards, medical regulators, and other stakeholders to identify challenges and share lessons learned with their colleagues. Rather than being perceived solely as enforcement authorities, regulatory bodies have the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership role through collaborations that leverage the power of education to respond nimbly to emerging health priorities.

By building consensus and collaboration, the community of regulators can aim to achieve a shared strategic vision—we can better meet the needs of upcoming generations of clinicians, drive quality in medical education, and improve care for the patients and communities we all serve.

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References