Education is important, right? You are probably thinking, “Duh, of course.” But the reality is that many of us are so busy performing our daily routines that we have little time to seek the educational opportunities we want and need. When we do find them, they may be too costly or offered at an inconvenient time or place. As laboratory professionals ourselves, ASCP leaders understand these problems and endeavor to make ASCP continuing education affordable and easily accessible.

Certification Maintenance

Because of the current onslaught of new medical discoveries and the rapid development of new laboratory technologies, continuing education (CE) is more important than ever. Thus, in 2004, the ASCP Board of Certification (BOC) implemented the Certification Maintenance Program (CMP), which requires laboratory professionals to fulfill certain CE requirements in order to maintain their ASCP certification. Those certified before 2004 are exempt from CMP, but they may choose to participate voluntarily.
Science connects the dots. Great science connects minds.

Making the connections requires a unified view. With Abbott Diagnostics, it's easy for you to link sophisticated instruments and reliable results with education and services that help support your team. It all ties to a quality of testing and medical knowledge that elevates your lab's impact throughout the entire hospital. By eliminating everyday frustrations, together we can advance everyday science and improve clinical outcomes. Ask your Abbott representative about our growing portfolio or visit abbottdiagnostics.com.

Put science on your side.

© 2009 Abbott Laboratories MS_09_103550v1
I was certified longer ago than I care to admit, so my Medical Technologist and Specialist in Hematology certifications will never be taken from me. However, I choose to participate in CMP because I believe CE is necessary to stay abreast of my profession. Consequently, I now fulfill my CE requirements every year, not only to keep my knowledge and skills up-to-date but also to have clear documentation of that fact. Fortunately, ASCP has made it easier than ever to do this. I can get my CE credits from a variety of sources and keep track of all of them on the ASCP Web site.

ASCP itself tries to meet the CE needs of laboratory professionals by presenting information in a variety of forms, from journal articles, to teleconferences, to live events. Each format has its own merits and usefulness. Journals can be read at any time or place, while teleconferences can be attended as live events (where I usually learn as much from the question-and-answer portion as I do from the lecture). Live events also provide opportunities to network with peers and share information and ideas. Most people discover that many of their colleagues face the same problems and can frequently offer suggestions or solutions.

Live events such as Workshops for Laboratory Professionals feature renowned speakers who can give attendees excellent in-depth information on a subject. Teleconferences are another alternative and, because they seldom require travel, are more appealing to some people.

Another method of CE delivery is the use of well-written articles and papers on particular subjects. By incorporating learning objectives and adding a post-test, these become a source of CE credits. Participants must review the material and successfully complete the post-test. Test questions, which are generally very well crafted, allow us to verify comprehension of the material. This education model appeals to people who like to do things on their own. Examples include LabQ, LabQ-P, CheckSample, Online Case Studies, and AJCP articles.

‘Re.member’ Makes It Easy

To make the whole process of earning and tracking CE credits even easier and more cost-effective, ASCP recently introduced the re.member membership plan. It is ideal for new graduates and people like me who need CE credits for recertification. By signing up for re.member, I can track my CE activities online and determine the CE credits I need to complete my CMP. I am alerted when I accumulate enough credits to recertify. The information is then sent to the BOC and my CMP is easily completed.

The plan also benefits employers. Some of the facilities I consult with have offered to reimburse employees some or all of the cost of the re.member membership. Because the re.member plan includes ASCP membership and the CE needed for certification maintenance, this is a win-win situation for both sides. Employers are spending money primarily for education without the travel costs, and employees have access to a wide array of CE materials and automatic tracking of their CMP credits.

As professionals, we must strive to be lifelong learners in order to stay current in our field. The easiest way to accomplish this goal is to maintain membership in a professional organization and to participate in CE activities. ASCP offers both with the re.member membership plan—a true “solution” to the recertification process.

If you have any comments or questions about this column, please e-mail me at MemberChair@ascp.org.

Ms. Petersen is the Outreach Coordinator for Laboratory Services at Rice Memorial Hospital, Willmar, MN.