



NORCAL

Our Passion Protects Your Practice

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NORCAL Mutual's CME Program Receives Top Accreditation

San Francisco (July 31, 2009)—The continuing medical education (CME) program of NORCAL Mutual Insurance Company has been awarded the highest level of accreditation given by the Accreditation Council of Continuing Medical Education (ACCME).

For accredited providers of CME, "Accreditation with Commendation," which is given for six years, is achieved by only a small percentage of applicants. Although NORCAL first received the designation in 2003, ACCME raised its standards significantly in 2006, so NORCAL's renewed status is an extraordinary achievement.

In a July 17 letter to NORCAL, ACCME Chief Executive Murray Kopelow, MD, stated, "The ACCME congratulates you and commends your organization for not only meeting ACCME's accreditation requirements but for demonstrating that yours is a learning organization and change agent for the physicians you serve."

Last year, NORCAL's Risk Management and CME Department began an intensive, 18-month process of internal evaluation and refinement of the CME program—a process culminating in an intensive onsite interview and documentation review by ACCME.

"We continually improve our course offerings, publications and methods of CME delivery," said Stephen M. Farber, Vice President of Risk Management and CME, "so we felt confident about our program. But the new standards, and the emphasis on demonstrating physician behavioral change as a result of their CME participation, made the renewal process much more rigorous."

One recent innovation at NORCAL has been to make the entirety of CME monographs accessible online. Through personal accounts, policyholders can register for and take courses, keep track of their CME credits and download transcripts and certificates. The system affords analysis and trending of outcome data, including commitment to change based upon educational objectives. This data allows the risk management team to assist in implementing systems and processes to improve patient safety and mitigate the potential for professional liability exposure.

"Physicians have many CME sources, but NORCAL is different in offering a program tailored to patient safety improvements and risk management," said Dustin Shaver, Manager of CME. "We have a front-row seat at the convergence of medicine, law and insurance that allows us to develop CME topics that are relevant and up to date."

A recent example is the August issue of *Claims Rx*, a monthly publication for NORCAL policyholders. The article examines the growing provision of elective cosmetic procedures by physicians and the risks of providing such procedures without adequate training, supervision and resources.

Also added to NORCAL's library of CME offerings in 2009 is the CME course entitled *Cultural Competency and Health Literacy*. Misunderstandings based upon cultural differences or a patient's inability to understand medical information can affect core aspects of healthcare. The course aims to further increase the cultural and linguistic competency of physicians. The material offers a multi-tiered educational approach to communication best practices that reduce communication barriers between providers and patients. The course outlines appropriate management of informed consent or informed refusal when confronted with low health literacy, as well as compliance with pertinent laws and statutes pertaining to cultural competence, health literacy, communication with patients, and related reporting requirements.

"Our mission at NORCAL goes far beyond defending claims," said NORCAL CEO James Sunseri. "The real value lies in helping physicians practice in ways that protect patients from harm and reduce the risks of practice. Our CME program remains vital to achieving this."

Last year, there were more than 20,000 CME registrations by NORCAL policyholders.

NORCAL Mutual Insurance Company was formed by physicians in 1975 to provide the highest quality medical professional liability insurance products and services to its policyholder-owners. NORCAL Mutual insures nearly 20,000 physicians and other healthcare professionals in solo practice, medical groups, hospitals, clinics and allied healthcare facilities in California, Alaska and Rhode Island.