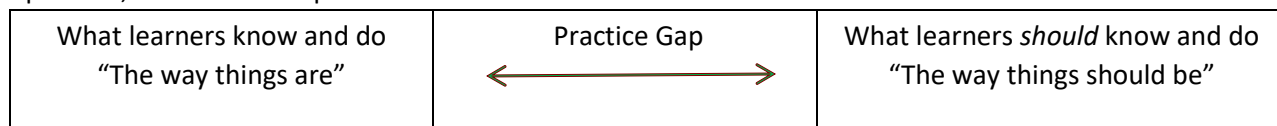# CME Activity Educational Planning
(Determining Practice Gaps)

Practice gaps describe a learner's deficiency or shortcoming, which if eliminated results in improvements in knowledge, competence and/or performance that can potentially improve performance and/or patient outcomes.

Practice gap: The difference between actual and ideal performance.

Gaps are the description of the problem in practice- in research practice, clinical practice, educational practice, administrative practice.

What learners know and do "The way things are"	Practice Gap ⟵————⟶	What learners *should* know and do "The way things should be"

Gaps exist when learners:

- Are not doing everything they could
- Are not doing things correctly
- Could improve what they are doing

Practice gaps are measured in terms of:

- **Knowledge:** being aware of what you do ○ Example: Misdiagnosis because of lack of knowledge or understanding
- **Competence:** being able to apply knowledge, skills and judgment in practice ○ Example: Suboptimal patient care because of lack of strategies or methods to intervene under certain clinical conditions.
- **Performance:** being able to implement a strategy or skill ○ Example: suboptimal patient outcomes because of lack of action, intervention, barriers, etc.

	Practice Gaps
Knowledge	What necessary information do your learners need to know? Do they need to identify or recognize something better?
Competence	What combination of knowledge, skills and behavior is currently inconsistent among your learners? Are their strategies inconsistent, or do they need to better distinguish, differentiate or predict something?

Performance	What do your learners fail to do or do inconsistently in practice? Are they unable to perform something or some aspect of diagnosis or treatment?

Knowing what the gaps are will drive both the development of learning objectives and the instructional design of the activity. In addition, if the gaps to be addressed are carefully chosen, they can also be used as part of the outcomes evaluation process to determine how effective the activity was.

Possible reasons for a practice gap could be:

- Lack of prompt or early recognition of…
- Inappropriate management of…
- Application of wrong or incorrect techniques
- Challenges to stay current with rapid advances in the field
- Lack of experience in managing or treating
- Condition is difficult or challenging to diagnose or treat
- Training is inadequate, inefficient, out of date
- Condition is poorly understood

Questions to ask when determining practice gaps:

- What has changed in your practice over the past year and what would therefore merit educational interventions?
- Have there been areas where quality indicators would suggest that a focused departmental improvement is appropriate?
- Is there breaking research in your area that physicians would find medically relevant to their practice and quality of care of their patients?
- Are there core competencies related to your profession that would be worth reinforcing and updating?

Methods to identify practice gaps:

- Prior course evaluations
- Member opinion surveys
- Expert/thought leader opinions
- Focus groups
- Direct interaction with clinicians
- Clinical practice guidelines
- New medical knowledge
- Data from peer-reviewed publications
- Data from public health sources
- Reported evidence of misdiagnosis or mistreatment

Determining Practice Gaps

Step 1: What is the current state? What is the optimal state? What is the gap in between these two states that your activating is addressing?

Practice Gap for the Activity

Step 2: Determine why this gap exists and whether it is based on lack of knowledge or competence, or behavior.

Select all that apply	Why does the practice gap exist and what are the underlying educational needs?	
☐	Lack of knowledge	
☐	Lack of competence	
☐	Lack of performance	

Step 3: Indicate what sources and kinds of information you used to identify the gap and determine the cause of the gap.

Select all that apply	Source	Examples
☐	Literature Review	Abstracts, full journal articles, government-produced documents describing educational need and physician practice gaps
☐	Medical Chart Review	Audit reports; chart reviews

☐	New Medical Knowledge	Description of the procedure, technology, treatment, etc.
☐	Morbidity and Mortality Data	www.cdc.gov/mmwr/
☐	National Practice Guidelines	NIH, www.guideline.gov
☐	Patient Safety Data	Description of the safety goal and current data statistics
☐	Prior Activity Feedback	Summary of requests or surveys showing information related to areas of educational need/topics of interest
☐	Quality Improvement Data	AHRQ, www.ahrq.gov
☐	Research Findings	Review of Optometry
☐	Other	Association or Foundation sites regarding the topic area

Step 4: Summarize your data and write a description of the needs assessment process you performed by providing an overview of:

- Where you found the data
- What information was extrapolated
- How you analyzed and synthesized the data

Summarize your data and provide an overview of the need's assessment process