
2009 Spiritual Care Collaborative Survey Results on Continuing Education

Martin Montonye, MS, D.Min.
Director of Clinical Pastoral Education
HealthCare Chaplaincy
New York, NY

Sue Wintz, M.Div., BCC
President, Association of Professional Chaplains
St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center
Phoenix, AZ

William Scrivener, M.Div., BCC
President, Association for Clinical Pastoral Education
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
Cincinnati, OH

Katherine Jankowski, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Pastoral Care & Education
HealthCare Chaplaincy
New York, NY

George Handzo, M.Div., M.A.
Vice President, Pastoral Care Leadership & Practice
HealthCare Chaplaincy
New York, NY

Karen Pugliese, M.A., BCC
SCC Steering Committee
Central DuPage-Spiritual Care
Winfield, IL

Correspondence can be sent to: Martin Montonye, e-mail, mmontonye@healthcarechaplaincy.org; Sue Wintz, e-mail Sue.Wintz@chw.edu; William Scrivener, e-mail Bill.Scrivener@cchmc.org; Katherine Jankowski, e-mail kjankowski@healthcarechaplaincy.org; George Handzo, e-mail, ghandzo@healthcarechaplaincy.org; Karen Pugliese, e-mail Karen_Pugliese@cdh.org

Continuing education for chaplains, pastoral counselors and clinical pastoral educators is important for maintaining and advancing professional competency. Pastoral professionals who visited the Spiritual Care Collaborative (SCC) website to register for a conference were asked to complete a questionnaire on continuing education. Results of the survey show that continuing education, both in-person and through electronic means, were clearly ranked as the most important activities the SCC partner organizations could provide in the future. Additionally, continuing education preferences vary depending upon constituent groups. These findings have implications for the design of future educational programs.

Introduction

Continuing education (CE) is necessary for professionals to remain up-to-date on important developments in their field. Traditionally, continuing professional education was obtained through in-person participation in conferences and through reading relevant professional literature. A new method of obtaining continuing education has been gaining in popularity across many professions- online continuing education. The online continuing education experience can range from reading a book downloaded to a portable electronic device to watching a video of an entire conference on a computer or

portable device. Enhancements of an online CE program include recording the amount of time a participant spent on an activity and providing a certificate of completion, as well as requiring a participant to complete a quiz to document the degree of learning accomplished.

A literature search of the electronic database Medline identified over 500 articles about online education in medicine that were published between 2000 and 2008. There is nearly a 6-fold increase over the number of articles published about online medical education compared to the entire preceding decade. A similar search indicated there was roughly a 3-fold increase in articles about online education in nursing during the same time-frame. The articles cover a wide range of topics. Many are about the development, implementation and evaluation of web-based courses and other online informational materials about various health problems and issues, which are specifically designed for different audiences: e.g., healthcare professionals, patients, and family caregivers.

Nursing was among the first healthcare profession to provide online continuing education (CE) courses (Bergren, 1999; Marcotte, 1999) and their coverage is expanding (Cobb, 2004). Internet CE courses are also becoming increasingly used in other healthcare professions, including anesthesiology (Howell, Rowbotham, & Reilly, 2007), nutrition (Wallner, Kendall, Hillers, Bradshaw, & Medeiros, 2007), pediatrics (Warren, Sapien, Fullerton-Gleason, 2008), physical therapy (Mathur, Stanton, & Reid, 2005), and other specialties (Stuber, Grod, Smith, & Powers, 2005), as well as general practice medicine (Casebeer, Bennett, Kristofco, Carillo, & Centor, 2002; Cobb, 2003, 2004).

The present study was designed to assess the degree to which chaplains, pastoral counselors, and pastoral care educators and students use different modalities for continuing education. It was thought that identifying the methods these groups use most often for continuing education would better enable the professional associations to offer and advocate for educational offerings that best meet their members' needs.

Methods

An online survey was conducted during same time period as the registration process for the 2009 Spiritual Care Collaborative (SCC) Conference for pastoral and spiritual care, counseling, education and research professionals. This conference is a first of its kind, encouraging professionals from all cognate groups to convene together in a spirit of collegiality for the strengthening of spiritual care. Links to the survey were sent via e-mail to all of the members of SCC organizations. SCC has a combined total membership of 10,000 and includes the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education (CAPPE), National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC), and National Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC).

Although the web-based survey contained questions about a number of topics, the focus of the current study is the extent to which SCC members use different kinds of information modes for continuing education. Approximately 20% of the collective membership of the Spiritual Care Collaborative (SCC) responded to the portion of the online survey that measured continuous professional learning (N = 2,030). The excellent response rate to the survey, conducted by the HealthCare Chaplaincy over only three months, from November 2008 to January 2009, shows strong interest in the topics and provides the member organizations with some valuable insight into future educational needs.

Survey participants were classified into groups for the analyses. The first group was "students and educators," which was comprised mainly of CPE supervisors, and to a lesser extent CPE students, residents and interns. A small number of seminary students and other educators also fell into this category.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of the sample with respect to age, gender, hospital as a workplace and involvement in education (students and educators). As seen in the table, the sample consisted of roughly equal numbers of men and women, with more than 70% of the participants being 50 and 69 years of age. Nearly 6 out of 10 participants worked in hospitals and 3 out of 10 were directly involved in education.

Table 1 Demographics of Respondents

Demographic		Frequency	Percent
Age	20's	12	1
	30's	90	4
	40's	306	15
	50's	799	39
	60's	670	33
	70's	141	7
	80's	12	1
Females		1001	49
Work in Hospitals		1204	59
Students and Educators		629	31

Results

Overall, 91% of respondents reported that they felt cognate groups would be strengthened if the SCC had joint, in-person continuing education events. In addition, 88% reported their groups would be strengthened by sharing continuing education via electronic means. Furthermore, 88% felt that participating organizations would be strengthened if SCC provided a common web-based clearinghouse for web-based professional resources.

The remaining results are divided into three sections. Section I summarizes participant responses of how often they read professional literature. Section II identifies the methods (books, online journals/classes, conferences, grand rounds, peer learning and formal courses) respondents use for continuous learning. Section III statistically analyzes and compares the responses of educators and non-educators with respect to their use of different continuing education modalities, and further analyzes differences in their use in terms of years of professional service, gender, age and workplace (hospital versus other).

Table 2 Percentages of Respondents Using Professional Literature as Sources of Continuous Professional Learning

Source	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Hastings Center Report	63	30	5	2
Journal Health Care Chaplaincy	44	37	14	5
Journal American Medical Association	58	36	5	1
Journal Pastoral Care and Counseling	14	36	28	21
New England Journal of Medicine	62	33	4	1
PlainViews	32	25	23	21

Section I. “How often do you read the following?”

Survey participants were asked how frequently they read six of the most popular professional resources in the field and instructed to record their responses by selecting *Never*, *Sometimes*, *Often* or *Always*. As seen in Table 2, the list included the *Hastings Center Report*, *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (JPCC), *New England Journal of Medicine*, and *PlainViews*. Twenty-one percent reported *always* reading the JPCC and twenty-one percent *always* reading *PlainViews*. The same two resources also ranked highest in the *often* category. Between twenty-five and thirty-seven percent of the respondents said they read all of the resources at least *sometimes*. A majority of participants report *never* reading *The Hastings Center Report*, the *New England Journal of Medicine* or JAMA. Resources receiving the largest combined total of *always* and *often* responses were JPCC (49%) and *PlainViews* (44%)

Section II. “To what extent do you use the following for continued education?”

This survey question measured respondents’ preferences in how they access instructional opportunities. Participants selected *Never*, *Sometimes* or *Often* related to their use of books, online journals, online classes, other online resources, conferences, grand rounds, peer learning and formal courses. Table 3 shows the responses of all the participants.

Table 3 Percentages of Respondents Using Various Continuous Professional Learning Resources

Source	Never	Sometimes	Often
Hard copies of books and/or journals	4	42	54
Electronic copies of books and/or journals	28	50	22
Online seminars or classes	46	43	12
Other online resources	22	56	22
Conferences (in person)	3	50	47
Peer learning	9	49	42
Formal courses	24	59	17
Grand rounds or other opportunities at work	19	38	43

Participants most *often* rely on hard copies of books and/or journals, conferences (in person), Grand Rounds or other opportunities at their place of work, and peer learning. Respondents also reported using these same resources *sometimes*, in addition to formal courses, other online resources, and electronic copies of books and/or journals. The three methods with the lowest use were online seminars and classes (46% never), electronic copies of books and/or journals (28% never) and formal courses (24% never). Four resources emerged with the highest rankings of *sometimes* and *often*: in-person conferences (97%), hard copies of books and/or journals (96%), peer learning (91%) and Grand Rounds or other workplace opportunities (81%).

Section III. Areas of most interest and key findings

Table 4 presents the average usage of different continuing education modalities by educators and students compared to other respondents. Since usage is measured on only a 3-point scale, the differences between the two groups look small, but most of them are statistically significant. The list of modalities has been reordered from that given in Table 3 in order to make it easier to illustrate the pattern of differences and similarities between the two groups.

Table 4. Average Usage of Continuing Education Modalities of Students and Educators Compared to Other Respondents

Modality	Students & Educators	Other Respondents
Hard copies of books and/or journals ***	1.61	1.44
Peer learning ***	1.52	1.25
Conferences (in person)	1.45	1.43
Grand rounds or other opportunities at work **	1.19	1.27
Electronic copies of books and/or journals ***	1.04	0.89
Other online resources *	1.06	0.98
Formal courses ***	1.03	0.88
Online seminars or classes *	0.62	0.68

* $p < .05$, * $p < .01$, * $p < .001$; 0 = never, 1 = sometimes, 2 = often

Hard copies of books/journals and peer learning were two of the most commonly used modalities for both groups, but analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) revealed that students and educators used them significantly more often ($p < .001$). In-person conferences was the second and third most frequently used modality for, non-educators and students/educators, respectively, and there was no group difference in its use. Non-educators, however, were more likely to use Grand Rounds and other work opportunities for continuing education ($p < .05$). This is probably attributable to the fact that the vast majority of chaplains in the sample work in hospitals and individuals who work in hospitals are, naturally, far more likely to attend Grand Rounds. Indeed, the analysis showed that working in a hospital was strongly associated with using Grand Rounds and other opportunities at work ($r = .31, p < .001$). Both group made extensive use of electronic resources, yet students and educators were significantly more likely to use electronic copies of books and journals ($p < .001$), and other online resources ($p < .05$) than were other survey participants. Students and educators also were significantly more likely to use formal courses than other participants ($p < .001$), but other participants used online seminars more often ($p < .05$).

Age of participants had small to moderate negative correlations with the use of electronic media, with older individuals being significantly less likely than younger respondents to use on-line seminars and classes ($r = -.06, p < .01$) electronic books and/or journals ($r = -.19, p < .001$) and other kinds of online resources ($r = -.11, p < .001$). Participants with more years of professional experience were more likely to attend conferences ($r = .10, p < .001$), but they were less likely to take formal courses ($r = -.11, p < .001$) than participants with fewer years of experiences. The only significant gender difference among participants was that females reported taking more formal courses ($r = .11, p < .001$).

Discussion

Survey results show that there is a very strong interest in professional continuing education among members of the organizations, and the role of the SCC as being a catalyst in strengthening the organizations through a combination of online resources, traditional continuing education, and opportunities for peer-to-peer conference networking. In addition to reading PlainViews, the majority of participants were likely to use online resources. The participants were likely to read the *Journal of*

Pastoral Care and Counseling which is sponsored by the cognate groups. Like other health professionals, they are still more inclined to prefer live lectures and in-person conferences (Cobb, 2003, 2004).

The pastoral care professionals in our sample reported their organizations would be strengthened by the SCC providing continuing education both online and in traditional formats, and the choice of method used seems to depend, in part, on their education, age and gender. Younger chaplains differ from older chaplains in that younger chaplains were more likely to use electronic media. Older respondents were more likely to attend conferences and use other face-to-face situations. Educators were more likely to use formal course, books and electronic media. Perhaps, on-going educational programs that provide a mix of traditional and online resources will provide the best educational experience for the members of Generation X and Net Generation as they come up through the ranks of the membership. Surveys of physicians have found that those who use online continuing education courses enjoy them more than in-person courses (Cobb, 2004; Stuber et al., 2005).

Research has shown there are a number of barriers to utilizing online education. The foremost are lack of internet access, and the lack of computer competence, or confidence (Cobb, 2003; 2004; Mamary & Charles, 2000; Mathur, et al., 2005). Another barrier is a dearth of relevant, easily usable resources (Casebeer et al., 2002; Stuber et al., 2005). Finally, for our participants there could be a concern that online continuing education will not capture the experiential essence of pastoral education. Future research is needed to better understand the barriers to online continuing education for pastoral professionals.

The study has several limitations, mainly related to the sample itself. First, although a fairly large number of chaplains and pastoral care counselors responded to the survey, the sample represents a relatively small percentage of the membership of the organizations involved. The actual response rate cannot be calculated because the invitations to participate in the survey were distributed by each of the associations, and many individuals belong to two or more associations. Moreover, while the invitations were sent to all members, those who responded were self-selected, presumably depending on the degree of interest they had in the issues. A more scientific sample would require sending survey invitations to a random sample of all members using a consolidated list, and following-up with non-respondents to increase participation.

In conclusion, organizations providing continuing education for pastoral professionals might expect that face-to-face is an important feature to include. As the profession grows and technology improves, electronic media will likely become an important source of continuing education, as it has become in other healthcare fields.


Acknowledgement:

The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the research staff of The Spears Research Institute of HealthCare Chaplaincy for their help developing the web-based questionnaire, and collecting and analyzing the survey data.


References

- Bergren, M. (1999). Online continuing education. *Journal of School Nursing, 15*(4), 32-34.
- Casebeer, L., Bennett, N., Kristofco, R., Carillo, A., & Centor, R. (2002). Physician Internet Medical Information Seeking and On-line Continuing Education Use Patterns. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions, 22*(1), 33-42.
- Cobb, S. (2003). Comparison of oncology nurse and physician use of the Internet for continuing education. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 34*(4), 184-188.
- Cobb, S. (2004). Internet Continuing Education for Health Care Professionals: An Integrative Review. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions, 24*(3), 171-180.
- Howell, S., Rowbotham, D., & Reilly, C. (2007). On-line continuing education--another step forward. *British Journal of Anaesthesia, 98*(1), 3.


- Mamary, E., & Charles, P. (2000). On-site to on-line: barriers to the use of computers for continuing education. *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 20(3), 171-175.
- Mathur, S., Stanton, S., & Reid, W. (2005). Canadian Physical Therapists' Interest in Web-Based and Computer-Assisted Continuing Education. *Physical Therapy*, 85(3), 226-237.
- Marcotte, A. (1999). Continuing education on the Internet. Online options for NPs. *Advance for Nurse Practitioners*, 7(10), 60-62.
- Stuber, K., Grod, J., Smith, D., & Powers, P. (2005). An online survey of chiropractors' opinions of Continuing Education. *Chiropractic & Osteopathy*, 13(22).
- Wallner, S., Kendall, P., Hillers, V., Bradshaw, E., & Medeiros, L. (2007). Online continuing education course enhances nutrition and health professionals' knowledge of food safety issues of high-risk populations. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 107(8), 1333-1338.
- Warren, L., Sapien, R., & Fullerton-Gleason, L. (2008). Is online pediatric continuing education effective in a rural state? *Prehospital Emergency Care*, 12(4), 498-50.



association
canadienne
pour la pratique
et l'éducation
pastorales



canadian
association
pastoral
practice
education



750 St. Margaret's Bay Rd.
Ingramport, Nova Scotia
Canada, B3Z 3Z7

CAPPE is a national multifaith organization which is committed to the professional education, certification and support of people involved in pastoral care and pastoral counselling.

ACPEP est une organisation multiconfessionnelle nationale qui se consacre à la formation, à l'accréditation et au soutien professionnels des personnes engagées dans le service pastoral et le counseling pastoral.

Phone: 1-866-44CAPPE

www.cappe.org

Fax: 1-902-820-3087