

PHYSICIAN COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT: CHARACTERISTICS OF 1000 PHYSICIANS REFERRED FOR ASSESSMENT

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Introduction: In October of 1990 CPEP, the Center for Personalized Education for Physicians, conducted its first Assessment and in February of 2009 the organization completed its 1000th Assessment – an important milestone for CPEP and for the medical community. In light of this milestone, CPEP elected to provide a descriptive report of the characteristics of physicians who have been referred for a competence assessment and compare these findings with the general U.S. physician population.

Background: Due to a desire for a less punitive response to physicians with clinical competence concerns, and with the recognition that traditional CME did not appear to be effective in these situations, the medical community in Colorado created CPEP. The organization was formed to design a mechanism to assess the specific educational needs of practicing physicians, using validated and reliable tools, and then devise an individualized education program designed to address identified deficits. CPEP was intentionally developed as a non-profit organization to allow an independent and objective venue for physician assessment. Though initially created to respond to needs within Colorado, CPEP began evaluating out-of-state physicians almost upon its inception. More than 75% of CPEP participants come from other states.

Purpose: The purposes of this study are to: (1) compare characteristics of physicians who have been referred to a competency assessment process to the general U.S. physician population, and (2) share lessons learned about physicians who present for a post-licensure assessment.

Methods: Data from 1000 CPEP participants will be compared to data from the general U.S. physician population. CPEP data was obtained from written documentation submitted by participants as well as from reports generated by CPEP. Data on the U.S. physician population is taken from the Physician Characteristics and Distribution in the U.S., 2009, published by the American Medical Association.

Results: Reported characteristics include gender, age, location of medical school training, board-certification status, specialty, practice location (rural/urban), and other practice characteristics. Characteristics that distinguish CPEP participants from the general U.S. physician population are identified and discussed. Data on referral sources, geographic distribution, and assessment outcomes provide insights into the impact of competence assessment programs.

Conclusions: This descriptive study reports the characteristics of physicians enrolled in a post-licensure assessment process, and explores how competence assessment programs assist a distinct segment of the physician population.