



E77 An Evaluation of a Model for Providing Cost-Effective, Accessible Continuing Education Content to Forensic Scientists

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Learning Overview: The goal of this presentation is to present an updated model and its subsequent assessment for the development and optimized delivery of online continuing education for the forensic science community

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by sharing best practices learned through the development and delivery of cost-effective, accessible, continuing education content approved by the American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT) and the American Board of Criminalists (ABC) to more than 6,000 forensic students and professionals worldwide in an online format. Key learnings regarding the optimal event format, finance, technology, and operations will be shared.

Adequate training and continuing education are critical to ensuring the quality and credibility of forensic science practice.¹ Certification programs such as the one administered by ABFT and ABC have been applauded and recognized for their rigor in establishing educational, training, and experience requirements for forensic science professionals. A gap exists, however, in an individual's ability to identify cost-effective, accessible continuing education content to meet these certification requirements in as much as there is no programmatic approach to educational needs assessment and content development, the delivery channel (face-to-face, online, hybrid) is not optimized, and there is no central repository of available educational opportunities. As a result, not all forensic scientists are getting cost-effective access to the educational content required to remain current in their field. Online continuing education is on the rise as this modality of dissemination allows for accessibility, convenience, and affordability. This study presents a detailed model and its subsequent assessment for the development and optimized delivery of compelling online continuing education content for the forensic science community. The model, which includes an educational needs assessment, gap analysis, delivery and archival, along with participant feedback, was tested through the launch of an online symposium series, offered free of charge to participants. Each day, representing a virtual Master Class, an in-depth examination of a topic is presented by world-class practitioners having a unique mastery of the subject. A three-year study of over 6,000 participants representing >70 countries was undertaken to assess and improve the efficacy of the model relative to its stated goals.

Best practices were identified relative to organizational structure, technology, contingency planning, operational execution, and financing of the event along with opportunities to further enhance the model to meet the stated objectives of accessible, compelling, cost-effective continuing education for forensic professionals. This study provides empirical support for the use of online continuing education to support the professional development needs of the forensic science community. The results demonstrated that participants found the online symposium model fulfilled expressed learning goals and their engagement in the forum met required continuing education requirements.

Reference(s):

- ^{1.} National Research Council (NRC) Committee on Identifying the Needs of the Forensic Science Community. *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2019: 29.

Continuing Education, Online, Virtual