# Needs Assessment Guidelines

Needs assessment is the systematic process of gathering information and using it to determine instructional solutions to close the gap between:

**Actual:** What learners know & do

AND

**Optimal:** What learners should know & do.

Identification and analysis of CME needs provide the basis for developing educational objectives. The planning committee should ask the following questions:

- How prevalent is the need among the target audience?
- How many different assessment sources indicated this need?
- How significantly will the unfulfilled need hinder health care delivery?
- How directly is the need related to actual physician performance?
- How likely is it that a CME activity will improve practice behavior?
- Are sufficient resources available to effectively address this topic?
- How receptive will the target audience be to a session on this topic?

# Types of Needs Assessment

- **Inferred needs** which may be derived from the following:
  - New methods of diagnosis or treatment
  - Availability of new medication(s) or indication(s)
  - Development of new technology
  - Input from experts regarding advances in medical knowledge
  - Acquisition of new facilities or equipment
  - Legislative, regulatory, or organizational changes effecting patient care
- **Verbalized needs and interests** which may be derived from the following:
  - Requests submitted on participants' activity evaluation forms
  - Formal surveys of potential participants (mail and Internet-based)
  - Informal comments
  - Patient problem inventories compiled by potential participants
  - Consensus of faculty members within a department or service area
- **Proven needs** which are based on objective external data sources. These needs may be derived from the following:
  - Epidemiological data
  - Quality assurance/audit data
  - Re-credential review
  - Morbidity/Mortality
  - Statistics Infection control data
  - Surgical procedures statistics
  - Professional society requirements
  - Journal articles/literature citations
  - News media