Standards to be set for pharmacy certificate programs

ACPE will take lead, accredit programs

Certificate programs for pharmacists—how do they differ from garden-variety continuing education? From “certification”? What makes a quality program?

A growing number of programs are available for pharmacists hoping for an advantage in the job market or a sign to payers that their dollars are well spent. To begin sorting out the current offerings and defining future ones, the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP) and American Council on Pharmaceutical Education (ACPE) convened a meeting of U.S. pharmacy organization leaders August 10–11.

The group agreed to develop profession-wide standards for certificate programs. ACPE will lead the effort and serve as the accrediting body for these programs.

The 30 conference attendees, representing 15 organizations, discussed the purposes of certificate programs and the critical elements and indicators of quality in such programs. Participants noted the need for experiential as well as didactic components, to ensure competence in the context of the workplace. The agreed-upon critical elements were linked to practice competencies and outcome expectations.

With this input by the conference, ACPE will adapt its program for approving continuing-education offerings to support distinctive standards and a quality assurance process for certificate programs.

JCAHO extends time, options for root cause analysis of sentinel events

Facilities accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) now have 45 days after the occurrence of a sentinel event to submit an analysis of the root cause of that event. Previously, organizations that did not submit the analysis within 30 days of the event (or of becoming aware of the event) could be placed on JCAHO’s public “accreditation watch” list.

JCAHO defines a sentinel event as “an unexpected occurrence involving death or serious physical or psychological injury, or the risk thereof” (see June 1, 1998, AJHP, page 1112).

In response to concerns that information submitted in root cause analyses could result in negative publicity and increased malpractice liability for accredited organizations, JCAHO began in July to offer onsite review of the written root cause analysis. JCAHO has now expanded the options for onsite review to include “direct assessment of root cause analysis information without explicit review of the underlying document.” Another option being tested for organizations that meet certain criteria is onsite examination of the organization’s sentinel event review process and its implementation of relevant policies and procedures.

An organization that refuses to permit review of its response to a sentinel event, either by submitting the required documentation to JCAHO or requesting onsite review, is placed on accreditation watch.

Continued refusal to permit review could lead to eventual loss of accreditation.