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Integrating a Paradigm Shift in the Treatment of Neuroendocrine Tumors and Carcinoid Syndrome: Effect of Online CME on Clinicians Knowledge and Competence

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BACKGROUND: The objective of this study was to determine the effect of online CME on the knowledge and competence of clinicians regarding the management of metastatic NETs and carcinoid syndrome.

METHODS: The effect of a 5000 word interactive case-based educational intervention on the treatment of NETs and carcinoid syndrome was analyzed to determine efficacy of on-demand, physician education. Educational design included a “test, then teach” approach to elicit cognitive dissonance, with evidence-based feedback provided following each learner response. The activity launched online in November 2017 and data were collected through January 2018. To assess educational effectiveness, participants were asked a set of case-based questions and a question assessing confidence level, prior to, and again after, exposure to the activity. A Chi-square Test of Independence determined statistical significance while Cramer’s V was used to estimate the effect of the intervention on clinicians’ knowledge and competence.

RESULTS: 151 gastroenterologists and oncologists were assessed. Upon completion of the activity, a pre- to post-activity improvement was observed in gastroenterologists' and oncologists', respectively:

- Recognition of the need to order 5-HIAA testing prior to initiating treatment (61% vs 86%, $P < 0.001$; 54% vs 98%, $P < 0.001$)
- Selection of the most appropriate regimen for a patient that presents with metastatic NETs and carcinoid syndrome (59% vs 76%, $P = 0.027$; 63% vs 83%, $P = 0.01$)
- Identification of evidence-based treatment for a patient with refractory carcinoid syndrome (31% vs 65%, $P < 0.001$; 23% vs 75%, $P < 0.001$)
- Confidence in managing patients with carcinoid syndrome (+31%;+17%)

CONCLUSION: Online CME can improve the knowledge and competence of participating clinicians, showing that interactive, case-based education, which are made available on-demand, can be an effective tool for advancing clinical decision making in the management of patients with NETs and carcinoid syndrome. Additional studies are needed to assess whether improved aptitude translates to improved performance during clinical practice.