



## **3.0 Physician Compensation**

### **3.2 Continuing Medical Education Program**

#### **3.2.2 Rural Continuing Medical Education Program Policy – Individual Physicians**

##### **1.0 Purpose**

To provide for the disbursement of the Rural Continuing Medical Education funds (RCME) on a fair and consistent basis within the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA). The RCME benefit provides funding for medical education activities to support the maintenance of those medical skills and credentials required for rural practice. It is available to physicians who reside within an eligible community as defined under the Rural Subsidiary Agreement (RSA). These benefits are in addition to the CME benefit administered through the BC Medical Association (BCMA) Physician Benefit Plan.

##### **2.0 Guidelines**

###### **2.1 Principles**

- RCME funds should be used in a manner that provides cost effective continuing medical education for physicians.
- Physicians will be notified at least annually of the RCME entitlement available.
- The VIHA in consultation with the Continuing Professional Development Committee (CPDC) of the Health Authority Medical Advisory Committee (HAMAC) will regularly review and evaluate the reimbursement guidelines and effectiveness of the RCME funding and the reverted funds process.
- VIHA Guidelines for use of funds will follow the Ministry of Health Services RCME Policy and the relevant BCMA guidelines wherever possible.
- The BCMA CME rates will be the minimum reimbursement expense rates.

- 2.2** To be eligible for reimbursement, a physician must meet the eligibility criteria as defined in Chapter 1 Section 3 of the Ministry of Health's Rural Continuing Medical Education (RCME) policy. (<http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/pcb/education.html#rcme>)

## 2.3 General Information

- Information regarding allowable claims is contained in Table 1 of this policy.
- Claims must be paid within one year of attendance or purchase.
- Verification of attendance must be submitted with copies of receipts or cancelled cheques and other documentary evidence showing the name of the organization, date and location of meeting or course. Copies of credit card statements are not sufficient as receipts.
- Photocopies of original receipts will be accepted only if original receipts are needed for subsidiary reimbursement from another source of items not fully covered by this program (including but not limited to Canada Revenue Agency, BCMA, etc.) Applicants shall sign a guarantee that multiple sources will not be used to reimburse the same expenses.
- Where granted, proof of CME credit hours must be submitted for each course, conference or meeting.
- Social activities included in the cost of the registration will not be reimbursed.

## 2.4 Expenses Reimbursed

- Conferences and Courses

Medical conferences, symposia, courses, or society meetings that are sponsored or co-sponsored by a recognized medical education body and directed towards a medical and/or health care provider audience and where there has been physician involvement in planning/facilitating/presenting are eligible for reimbursement. Such courses may be offered universities, hospitals, medical associations and medical societies.

Proof of accreditation status (e.g., CFPC, RCPSC, AMA, AAFP or equivalent organization) should accompany the application for reimbursement. A minimum of 3.5 credit hours per day claimed is required for each day of CME reimbursement.

Travel will be reimbursed at the rate specified in Table 1. Pre-approval by the Medical Director, Continuing Professional Development is required if courses or events are:

- outside continental North America;
- aboard cruise ships;
- not sponsored by recognized medical education bodies; or
- informal traineeships.

Courses or events aboard cruise ships must have the registration fee separated from the overall cruise package price and it must be comparable to a land-based event. Accommodation expense may be claimed against the cruise price.

- Informal Training

Informal training programs require pre-approval by the Medical Director of Continuing Professional Development. In order to qualify for reimbursement, the applicant and/or preceptor must provide a letter outlining the timeframe over which the training will occur, skill development involved, and an outline of how the CME funds will be utilized to defray the cost of obtaining the additional clinical skills.

- Transportation

Eligible transportation costs may be reimbursed at the rate specified in Table 1. Receipts are required for all airfare and ground transportation.

Local transportation (i.e., 25 kilometres or less round trip) will not be reimbursed.

- Meal and Accommodation Allowance

Eligible meal and accommodation costs may be reimbursed at the rate specified in Table 1. Receipts are required for food and accommodation. If no receipts are provided, a per diem will be applied (see Table 1). Details of accommodations must be provided on the application form.

Accommodation expenses for local courses/conferences within 25 kilometers are not reimbursed.

- Medical Educational Materials

A variety of medical educational materials, including, but not limited to medical texts, journals, relevant computer software, audio and video tapes, audio/visual equipment, slides, computer hardware and library services may be reimbursed provided appropriate receipts are submitted. Dues pertaining to membership and association are not eligible for reimbursement. Costs of journals that are a component of such dues are also not eligible for reimbursement.

- Computer Hardware and Electronics

Electronic equipment will encompass all that is deemed to have a medical education component and can include computers, DVD/VCR players, digital cameras, smart phones, personal digital assistants and camcorders. Purchases should be for the educational use of an individual physician. **Multiple computers and items purchased for office administration purposes are not eligible for reimbursement** (e.g. office networks, fax/copiers, billing station, EMR). Details are contained in Table 1.

- Internet and Software

Fees for access of the Internet through a computer or Smartphone (e.g., Blackberry, iPhone, etc.) will be reimbursed at the rate specified in Table 1. Claims must include two Internet fee statements: one from the beginning and one from the end of the year being claimed.

- Overhead

A per diem may be claimed for each full office day missed at the rate specified in Table 1. Differing rates apply to sessional, facility based practices and service contract physicians as well as anesthesiologists, emergency physicians and locums.

## 2.5 Processing of Applications

The *VIHA Rural Continuing Medical Education Claim Form* must be used when submitting a claim. Where possible, original receipts must be attached to the application. Photocopies of receipts are acceptable. Claims should normally be submitted within 90 days and will not be accepted after one year.

All claims must be forwarded to Physician Compensation, c/o Finance, Nanaimo Regional General Hospital (NRGH), 1200 Dufferin Crescent, Nanaimo, BC V9S 2B7.

Rejected claims may be appealed to the HAMAC. Failing resolution by the HAMAC, a final appeal may be submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues for consideration.

## 2.6 Expired Funds

Physicians' RCME entitlements are 'banked' up to 3 years. For example, if a physician is entitled to \$2,000 in RCME benefits in a given year and does not submit any claims for RCME expenses incurred for that year and two subsequent years, the unused \$2,000 will revert to the Health Authority for use in providing CME.

The annual date for calculation of expired RCME funds for the Health Authority is March 31st.

## 2.7 Reverted RCME Funds

The Health Authority's use of Reverted RCME funds will be in consultation with the CPDC of the HAMAC and managed pursuant to the process detailed in Policy Number 3.2.3 Reverted Rural Continuing Medical Education Program Policy – Community Use.

**Table 1**

| <b>Expense Type</b>  | <b>Maximum Reimbursement</b>  | <b>Conditions</b>  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Course, Conference or Symposium costs</b>   | No maximum cost – no restriction on location within North America                       | Must provide receipts (not credit card statements) and course documentation. Social events are not eligible. Some pre-approval requirements apply (see Section 2.4 of Policy). |
| <b>Ground Transportation</b>   | \$.50/km  | Ground transportation expenses to a maximum not exceeding economy airfare plus necessary ground transportation. Car rental is eligible with appropriate receipts.              |
| <b>Air Transportation</b>  | \$1,500 limit within Continental North America  | Only economy fare is eligible. Receipts or e-ticket confirmation required (must show name, dates and location).  |
| <b>Meal and Accommodation Allowance</b>  | Maximum \$250/day for meals & accommodation when staying at a hotel (receipts required) | \$80/day for room & board when staying with friends or relatives. \$50/day for meals for day trips. Receipts not required.   |
| <b>Overhead</b>  | Maximum \$300 for each missed practice day and based on course and travel days.         | Physicians in private practice may claim up to \$300 for each full day of office missed. All other physicians may claim \$180/day for each day spent in education.             |
| <b>Books, Journals and Computer Software</b>   | No limit  | Receipts required. Computer software must be for medical educational purposes.   |
| <b>Video Conferences, instructional audio and video tapes, podcasts</b>  | No limit for accredited materials and events  | Receipts required. Subscription or purchase.   |
| <b>Computer Hardware Including Peripheral Devices</b>  | Maximum \$3000 per 3 years  | Receipts required. Personal computer with a component of educational use.  |
| <b>Electronic Equipment: DVD/Blue Ray Players, iPods, Voice Recorders, Digital Cameras, Camcorder/Digital Camera, PDA/Smartphones)</b> | Maximum \$500 per 3 years per item  | Receipts required. Use must be deemed to have a medical education component  |
| <b>Network Access Fees</b>   | Maximum \$1,200.00/year   | Receipts required.   |

Policy Relationships: Corporate Section Number: 3.0  
 Physician Compensation: Continuing Medical Education Sub-Section Number: 3.2