

SURVEY OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES OF OPTOMETRY:
USE OF THE INTERNET FOR DELIVERING ONLINE CONTINUING EDUCATION

PROBLEM. Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry plans to develop on-line continuing education (CE) courses in 2004. It was important to obtain information about the use of the Internet for delivering on-line CE courses by other schools and colleges of optometry so that an effective program could be developed.

METHODS. A mail questionnaire was sent to the dean or president of each of the seventeen schools and colleges of optometry in the United States. The survey was completed by the person in charge of continuing education at each institution and was submitted by all institutions (100% response rate).

RESULTS. Seven (41%) of the institutions reported that they offer online CE courses. Eight (80%) reported that they plan to do so within three years. The format of the courses include text only, text with tables and/or graphics, hypertext with tables and/or graphics, full-text journal articles, case presentations, and Web-based courses with CD-ROM. No institutions reported the use of interactive case presentations, audio and text, audio slideshows, video lectures, Webcasts, or multi-media. The fee charged for courses ranged from \$15 to \$30 per credit hour. All institutions' courses offered post-course tests. The relative cost of developing on-line CE courses varied. A visit to each of the institutions' homepages revealed that only one has a significant on-line CE presence.

CONCLUSIONS. All but one institution either offers or plans to offer on-line CE courses. A majority of on-line courses currently available to optometrists are offered by one institution. The format of the courses at all institutions varies, and none appear to be interactive. All courses offered by the schools and colleges of optometry appear to be eligible for COPE qualification, and therefore, they may be accepted to meet the CE requirements in 49 states.

EVIDENCE OF A NEW CONTRIBUTION. This is the first study to be undertaken that investigates the use of the Internet for delivering on-line CE courses by the schools and colleges of optometry.