

By Christian Loewe and Milos A. Lucic

Webinars as a CME tool: a survey by the Accreditation Council in Imaging

In 2019, the Accreditation Council in Imaging (ACI) conducted a survey among members of the European Society of Radiology about webinars as a CME tool, in order to learn more about the general level of knowledge in regard to Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). It was the third survey executed by the ACI since this important body was established.

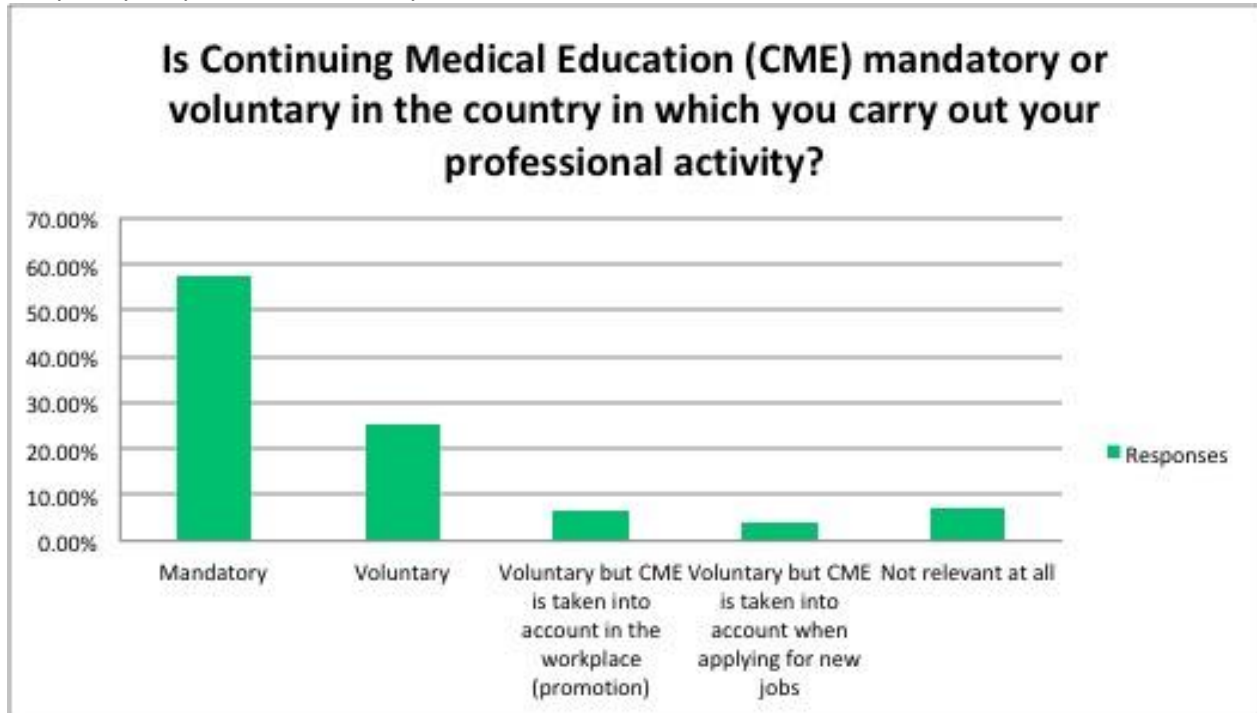
The number of webinars offered in the field of medical imaging is continuously growing, but most of them have not yet been accredited with CME credits, a fact that was brought to the attention of the ACI. Therefore, the ACI decided to carry out a survey on webinars to obtain information about the wants and needs of European radiologists in this regard.

The survey was sent out to all European members of the European Society of Radiology (a total of 35,000 individual recipients) of whom 732 responded – a participation rate of just 2.2%. Though the response rate is far from satisfactory, we believe that the answers received are able to provide an overview of the situation among European radiologists.

We received answers from respondents from 46 different countries, with the most responses coming from Italy, Spain and the UK. Radiologists accounted for 80% of the respondents, 14% were radiology residents, and about 6% chose the option 'other professions'. Most of the respondents were between 38 and 53 years old, and around 30% were younger than 38 years old.

The responses to whether CME is mandatory or voluntary in the country where the professional activity is carried out were quite interesting. Exactly 25% of the respondents declared that in their countries of work, the acquisition of CME credits is voluntary (exactly the same result as when the same question was asked in the first survey carried out by the ACI in 2017) and 7% stated that they are not important at all (Figure 1).

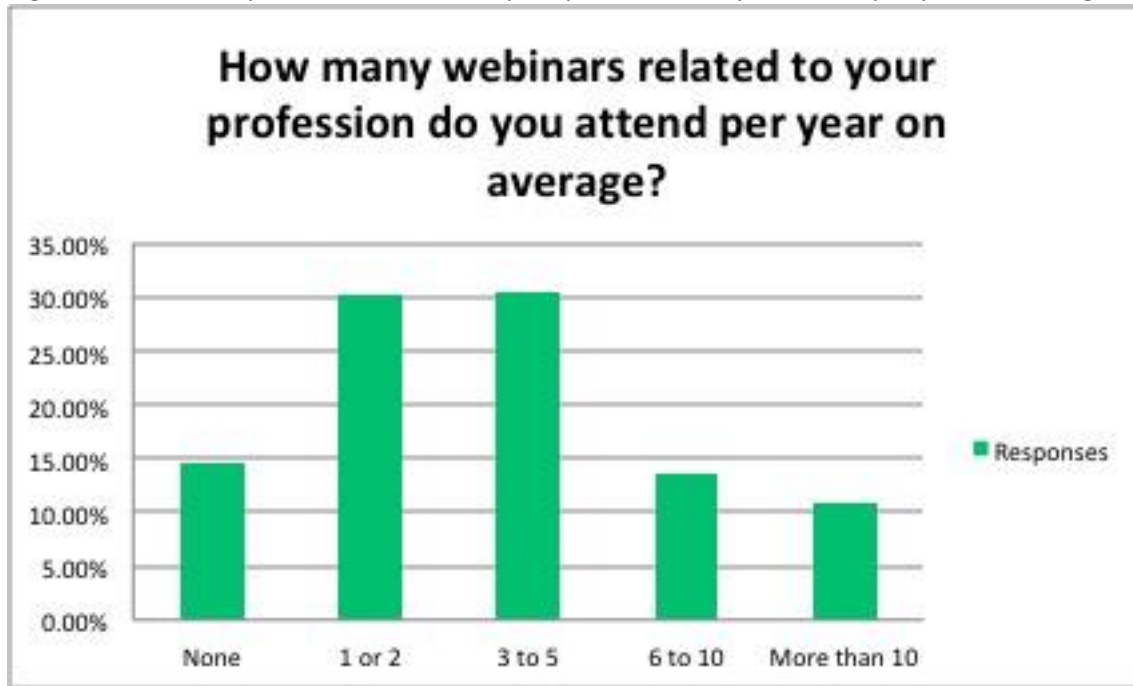
Figure 1 – Is Continuing Medical Education (CME) mandatory or voluntary in the country in which you carry out your professional activity?



Two conclusions can be made based on this steady statistic: firstly, it seems that this situation has not changed during the last two years, and secondly, ending up with exactly the same percentage in two different surveys carried out within two years emphasises that the results are quite representative, despite having a low response rate.

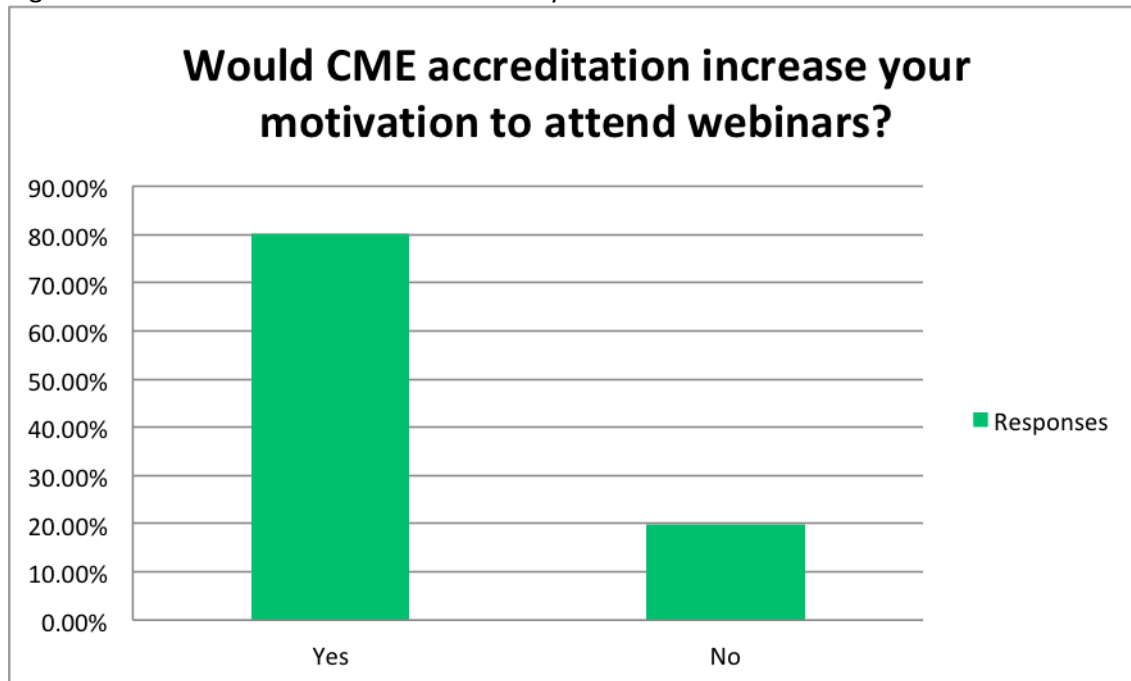
The main focus of the survey was to investigate the role and current value of webinars with regard to earning CME credits. About 60% of the respondents stated that they attend between one and five webinars per year and about 25% attend six or more webinars per year (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – How many webinars related to your profession do you attend per year on average?



Interestingly, 25% of the participants answered that the webinars they attended are either not CME accredited or that they do not even know whether they are or not. Almost 40% responded that only some of the webinars attended were accredited. However, 80% confirmed that the presence of CME accreditation would further increase their attendance of webinars (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Would CME accreditation increase your motivation to attend webinars?



In summary, webinars represent a relevant tool for CME, but they are utilised more for their content than to gain credits. On the other hand, it also underlines the need for expanded accreditation of webinars to harmonise quality and commercial bias requirements.

The last part of the survey aimed to learn about the common knowledge regarding the presence and activities of the ACI, founded in 2015, in the European radiological community. The fact that about 80% of respondents were not aware of the existence and the work of the ACI indicated that further promotion of the ACI activities may be justified in the near future.

Lessons learned?

The fact that a quarter of the respondents replied that they do not need any CME credits for their professional career at all, along with the fact that this statistic remained steady for two years, underlines the ongoing need to advertise CME as a tool to harmonise continuing medical education in Europe and the need for further improvement. The growing use of webinars, whether accredited or not, supports the importance of the ACI proposal to the UEMS to facilitate the accreditation process for webinars, which has been thoroughly discussed and agreed by both organisations.

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