

Continuing Education for the Busy PT

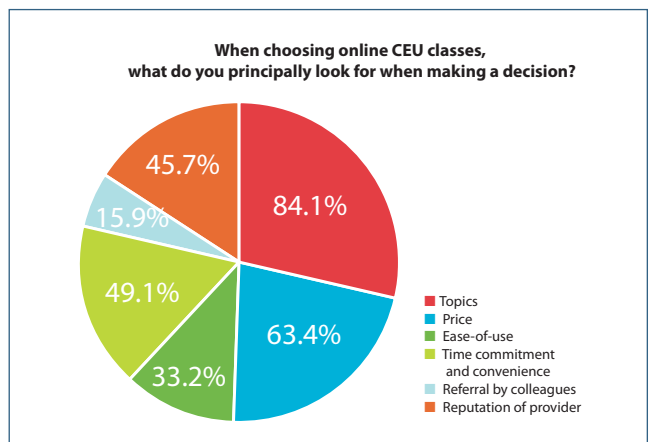
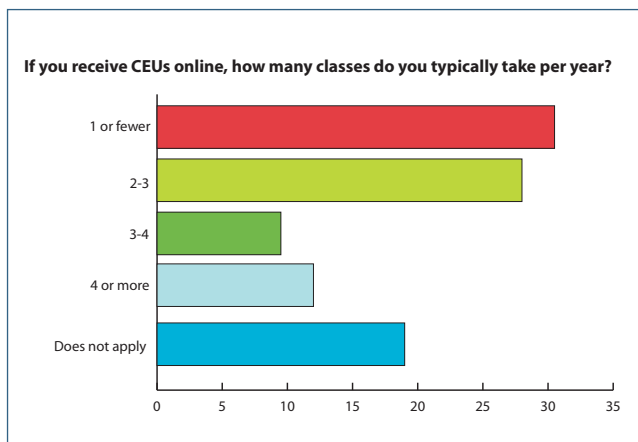
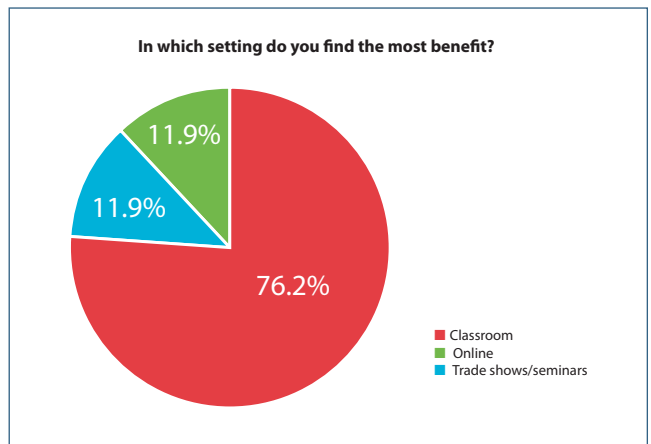
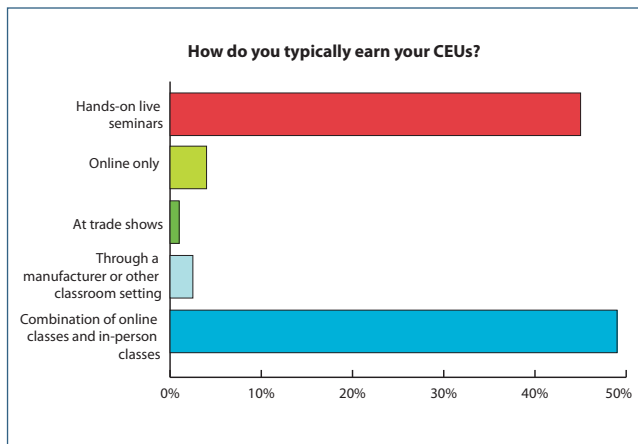
Physical Therapy Products explores how PTs earn their continuing education units

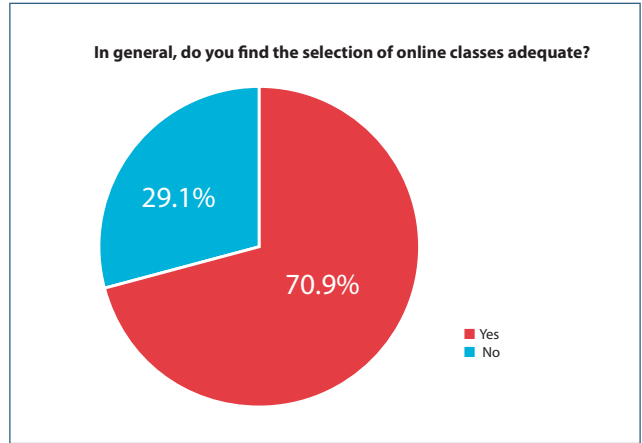
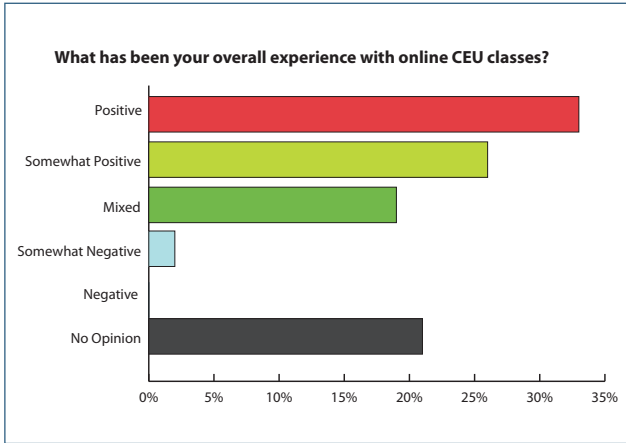
By Celia Soudry

Meeting continuing education unit (CEU) requirements can be a daunting task for today's busy-bodied physical therapist. Most PTs juggle keeping up on the latest therapy developments, treatment methods, and technologies, all while running a practice and/or managing several clients. *Physical Therapy Products* polled our online mailing list and collected responses from hundreds of therapy professionals about how they earn their CEU credits. To underscore the outcome of this survey—which reflects significant likes and dislikes, particularly among responses related to questions about learning settings and satisfaction with available online classes—we've depicted poll results in charts and graphs in this article.

Nearly half of the PTs surveyed (44.9%) said they typically earn their CEUs through hands-on live seminars, while the other half (49%) take a combination of online and in-person classes. Seventy-two percent benefited from in-person classroom courses, while 11.9% took online courses only. (The same percentage benefited from trade shows and seminars.)

One PT favored earning CEU units via North Carolina Physical Therapy Association and American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) meetings. Another survey participant recommended the Carolina Clinical Education Consortium Spring Conference. Some said the benefits were dependent on the subject matter, because some courses require lab work for hands-on training. Others noted





that both in-person and online courses are equally beneficial in their own ways.

Typically, PTs took one or fewer online classes per year (30.4%). Nearly one third of PTs took two to three classes per year, while less than 12% took four or more classes per year. When choosing online CEUs, PTs principally looked for topic areas (84%) more than ease of use and reputation of provider. There was an overall desire for more courses in the areas of pediatrics, orthopedics, and home care. More than half of the respondents were concerned with price, and about half of those questioned were also concerned with time commitment and convenience.

Seventy percent of PTs found the selection of online classes adequate, while the remainder did not. One respondent wanted more information on treatments for specialty areas, such as cancer, weight loss surgery, and balance, while another wanted to see more clinically focused courses.

The majority of the respondents said there were not enough choices. Some noted the need for more hand therapy courses, while others wanted more assisted technology offerings. One PT complained, saying, “General practice management (not billing) classes do not exist.” A PT who specializes in pelvic floor dysfunction voiced the want for more gynecological, urinary-gynecological, pharmacology, and GI-centered courses.

Some of the most popular choices in education providers our respondents identified in the survey were APTA and EDUCATA. Other providers favored by respondents include University of St. Augustine (www.usa.edu), Care To Learn (www.care2learn.com), and Home CEU

Connection (HomeCEUConnection.com).

For the final question on the survey—not represented in this article graphically—we asked respondents what improve-

ments they might suggest for online CEU offerings. One respondent noted that CEU courses should be more interactive and include multimedia elements, such as videos, graphics, and sound. Another PT suggested what is needed is a “greater variety of topics; relate topics to different populations—geriatric rehab is not a popular topic, and yet this population is growing dramatically.” Another suggestion was to have an online forum for the course so that participants can

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ask the instructor questions or bounce ideas off other clinicians.

One survey-taker likes the modules that are 1 hour to 2 hours in duration to fill in the gaps, but said, “I do feel there is a need for some larger courses—8 hours plus. With the economy and fewer employers offering continuing education assistance, it is difficult to travel out of town

due to cost, and it is hard to get all the CEUs from 1-hour to 2-hour courses. Would like to see more in specialized areas—these are needed for me to maintain advanced specialty certification—>18 hours per year—and they have to be in my specialty area, not just general CEUs.”

Finally, a respondent left us with some practical advice: “I prefer the interaction and questions of others, and since work is hands on, it is better experientially live. I can read a book and take a test, but until you try out the technique on a person, you really don’t know if you ‘get it’ regardless of your test of understanding the concept.” **PTP**