

GET THE BIGGEST BANG

# High-impact Learning

BY JAKE BUEHLER, ASRT DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS



What's the best way to earn 24 continuing education credits every two years to maintain your registration with the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists? Because you lead an extremely busy life, getting those credits can feel like an anchor around your neck.

Luckily, you are surrounded by a myriad of opportunities to earn CE credits. There are dozens of companies that offer courses online, in publications, through stores and in person. But which of these learning avenues works best for you? Do you prefer to sit in the comfort of your home, read a Directed Reading and take the accompanying test online? Or do you thrive in a classroom where you can ask questions and interact with your peers?

According to Barbara Whitefield, M.A., R.T.(R)(CV), director of continuing education at the ASRT, self-directed education and conference learning have advantages and disadvantages. "Some people enjoy working on their own and some work better in group environ-

ments, so it depends on what kind of learner the person is. The good news is that there are a lot of choices on both sides of the ledger.

"A great attribute of self-directed learning is that the activities are considered enduring materials," she said. "Once you have a copy of the Directed Reading or activity, you can always go back and reference the materials, which can be really helpful."

Debra Cooley, R.T.(R), a staff technologist at the Children's Health Center at the Medical Center of Central Georgia in Augusta, spends her days working with patients and her evenings teaching classes at her dance studio. Her busy schedule does not provide her



with a lot of time to travel; therefore, she prefers self-directed learning. "It's much easier to fit in an article or to watch a DVD than to travel to a conference or a workshop. I can grab the latest issue of *Radiologic Technology* and study during lunch breaks."

Self-directed activities also have a certain convenience factor that appeals to busy R.T.s. The freedom to complete the activities wherever and whenever you want is an extremely strong selling point. "With having four

kids and working full time, completing self-directed readings on my schedule is important to me," said Christine Pfeiffer, R.T.(R), a staff technologist at the Toledo Hospital in Ohio. "I belong to the ASRT and do the Directed Readings in the *Journal*," added

Christine. "I like the convenience of having the Directed Readings sent to me, doing them when I want to and not having to worry about keeping track of all my certificates."

ASRT members receive Directed Readings through *Radiologic Technology* and *Radiation Therapist* worth at least 12 CE credits annually, so the Registry's CE requirement can be met through member benefits alone without purchasing additional CE courses.

The flipside of self-directed CE is on-site conferences, which include the missing ingredient in self-directed learning: communication. Two-way communication is a built-in component of conference learning

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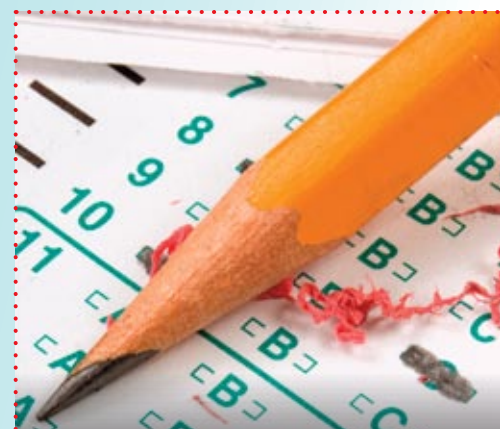
and it allows you to ask questions, get more detailed information about a subject and speak directly with individuals who experience the same challenges you do on a daily basis. Plus, you can usually earn a dozen CE credits in one weekend.

Another benefit is the rise of specialty conferences, from magnetic resonance to computed tomography, mammography and radiation therapy. More specialty conferences are emerging, which help professionals become better technologists.

In addition, conference learning provides you with the opportunity to network with your peers. You can't put a price on the value of networking, and conferences are the ideal place to make those connections that can lead to new friends, a promotion or even a new job.

However, conference learning is filled with its own challenges. Trying to squeeze in time off from work, school or family can be extremely difficult. And you sometimes have to be willing to travel long distances. And, conferences can be downright expensive. Registration alone can run anywhere from \$400 to \$1,500 and that doesn't include travel, lodging and meal expenses. Needless to say, costs can squash plans for attending a conference, particularly if they come out of your own pocket.

"It's important to note that the number of credits you might receive for a CE course shouldn't be the determining factor," added Barbara. "R.T.s should choose the learning format that works best for them and ultimately will help them provide better patient care." §



## Quiz Time!

**What's your learning style? Go to any of these sites to find out.**

[www.usd.edu/trio/tut/ts/stylest.html](http://www.usd.edu/trio/tut/ts/stylest.html) > styles.

[www.agelesslearner.com/assess/learningstyle.html](http://www.agelesslearner.com/assess/learningstyle.html).

<http://ttc.coe.uga.edu/surveys/LearningStyleInv.html>.

[www.petersons.com/education\\_planner/discovering\\_article.asp?sponsor=2859&articleName=Learning\\_Styles\\_Quiz](http://www.petersons.com/education_planner/discovering_article.asp?sponsor=2859&articleName=Learning_Styles_Quiz).

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