

Study Clubs – An Effective Way to Develop Meaningful Continuing Education

Not all opticians live in urban areas that typically have a greater number of educational seminars. Accordingly, we have developed the concept of a study group as an appropriate method of generating customized learning for small numbers of opticians while at the same time attracting continuing education credits.

What Is A Study Club?

A study club is a group of two or more people that get together on a regular basis to review a variety of topics related to Opticianry. Study clubs typically select articles from magazines related to the profession, or review textbooks on opticianry. Each of the members of the group read the selected article or text and then, at a weekly or monthly meeting, discusses the content of the article. The discussions are usually narrowly directed but can lead to a wider discussion on related topics. In short, a study club is very much like a book club.

A study club may also decide on a theme and have each member do research on a component of that theme and then report to the group at large.

How A Study Club Meets.

Study club members may wish to meet in person to establish the ground rules, shared responsibilities and timelines for a given study theme. It may be convenient for them to meet in person on a scheduled basis in a traditional 'book club' model.

However, electronic communication enables people to share information over greater distances and at times convenient to the individual member. Conference calls, e-mail and webinar-type sessions enable people to share and learn at a very sophisticated level should they choose.

The Paper Work

As always there is a catch. You do need to properly document your study club initiatives. Follow the outlines below and it is as simple as one two three.

How to Develop a Study Club

A study club is a good way to gain credits for the CE requirements. What is involved in developing a study club?

Start with the following:

1. Names of interested and committed opticians (minimum two)
2. Name of a coordinator
3. Topic and outline of study

4. Objective of study
5. Study materials

The Importance of the Study Club Coordinator

All members of the study club should share the responsibility for undertaking quality study and should participate with the spirit in which the study club concept is intended. However the study club coordinator role is extremely important. This individual needs to act as a sort of recording secretary for the group. The study club coordinator will make sure that timelines are met and that study club members who are not meeting their obligations are replaced with more productive candidates. The study club coordinator will make sure that all members are satisfied with the challenges presented by the study themes and that no one person dominates the group. In short, the study club coordinator ensures that the group's request for continuing education credits is supported by meaningful study.

Review the Application for Study Club Continuing Education Credits

The application asks for information on "objective", "outline of study", and "study materials". Keep these questions in mind when you develop the study course. Once the course has been developed, submit all the details along with the Study Club Application to the College to be reviewed.

Topic and Outline of Study Course

Decide on the topic, and outline the content of the course. For example, if your topic is High Index Prescription Lenses, the content could be divided into:

- Materials
- Index Refraction
- Lens Designs
- Coatings
- Prescriptions
- Lens specifications

Format

The format of the course may be lecture style, discussions, hands-on practice, or PowerPoint, etc.

Study Materials

When you submit your study group/s theme for accreditation, include detailed information about the study materials, such as title and date of publication.

Articles can be selected from almost all professional publications; you might start with articles from "Vision Magazine" contact lens articles from "Spectrum". Most offices have many sources available to them. You can also review the web sites

of the professional associations that have material for study clubs packaged and ready to go.

Time Commitment

Report the time commitment to the study course including duration and frequency. You can describe your time commitment as "3 hour sessions, for two weeks, meeting once per week November 01 to 15,2007."

Verification of Course Completion

Each optician is required to submit an application for credits under the study club format. The club coordinator is required to sign the application thus verifying that the work has been performed and that the opticians has contributed to the study group as required. It may be a good idea to develop a test upon completing the study of the theme so that study club members can demonstrate that learning has taken place.