



Approved: Board of Directors – 05/20/06

MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION POLICY STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

The vast majority of the more than 10,000 members of the American Academy of Dermatology (Academy) has successfully completed accredited residency training programs in dermatology. Similarly, the majority of Academy members has been certified by the American Board of Dermatology (ABD) as having the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities to successfully practice dermatology. The Academy and ABD are two distinct and separate organizations, each with their own governing boards, structure and bylaws.

Prior to 1991, the ABD issued “lifetime” certificates, requiring no further action on the part of the physician to maintain certification. Since 1991, the ABD has issued “time-limited” certificates that require the diplomates to renew their certificates at 10-year intervals. The ABD has also committed to the gradual conversion of its current process of recertification to a process of “Maintenance of Certification” that according to the ABD, is “consistent with guidelines established by the ABMS and with the distinctive nature and elements of the specialty of dermatology.”

As a member Board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the ABD has joined with the other 23 certifying ABMS Boards to implement a “Maintenance of Certification” program. The ABMS defines the program as “a process designed to document that physician specialists, certified by one of the 24 approved member boards of the ABMS, maintain the necessary competencies to provide quality patient care in the specialties in which they have been certified. It is an ongoing process and will require the assessment and improvement of practice performance by physician specialists.”

The ABMS Maintenance of Certification Program (MOC), applicable to all 24 member boards, has four basic components, as stated at the ABMS website (<http://www.abms.org/MOC.asp>):

1. Evidence of professional standing, such as an unrestricted license, a license that has no limitations of the practice of medicine and surgery in that jurisdiction;
2. Evidence of commitment to lifelong learning and involvement in a periodic self-assessment process to guide continuing learning;
3. Evidence of cognitive expertise based on performance on an examination. That exam should be secure, reliable, and valid. It must contain questions on fundamental knowledge, up-to-date practice-related knowledge, and other issues such as ethics and professionalism;

4. Evidence of evaluation of performance in practice, including the medical care provided for common/major health problems (e.g., asthma, diabetes, heart disease, hernia, hip surgery) and physician behaviors, such as communication, and professionalism, as they relate to patient care.

The Academy has closely monitored the development and evolution of the ABD's MOC process. As a voluntary membership organization, the AAD has a responsibility to assist its members in responding to changes in virtually every aspect of medicine and the specialty of dermatology, and to represent them in discussions with other entities. Certifying bodies, such as the ABMS and ABD, have previously implemented changes that at times have generated debate. The Academy is committed to helping its members respond to the ever-changing practice environment and to changes in the certification process by the ABMS and the ABD. It supports members through physician educational activities, patient education materials, effective practice management information, and working to ensure that the physicians' environment enables them to provide continued high quality dermatologic care to patients in the least restrictive practice environment. As the MOC program is implemented by the ABD, the Academy, as the umbrella organization for dermatologists, will continue to support members' best interests in practice and patient care.

According to the ABMS and ABD, the goal of the MOC program is to assure continued competence of board-certified physician specialists. Members of the Academy are firmly committed to the goal of continued competence of board-certified physicians and quality patient care. The Academy is an accredited provider of continuing medical education (CME). The high level of participation in the Academy's CME programs and involvement in the organization are clear indications of Academy members' commitment to lifelong learning and continuous quality improvement. However, the Academy continues to have concerns about how MOC will affect the individual member's practice and what additional responsibilities the member with a time-limited certificate will incur as a result of the program.

Medicine is both a science and an art, and quality is not easily or uniformly quantified across all specialties. While all physicians share some common knowledge and experience, each specialty is unique, with its own body of knowledge and skill set. There is no single way to document and/or measure "quality."

However, the Academy recognizes that non-participation by the ABD in this process is not an option, and also that the Academy has a responsibility to support its members by being involved in discussions with the ABD to assure the process is as fair and reasonable as possible, and that it provides members with the tools necessary to successfully participate in the MOC process.

The Academy recognizes the critical issues of quality of care and patient safety, and the increasing importance of public perception of, and attention to quality. How the Academy, the specialty of dermatology, and the practitioners of the specialty, adapt to this change will reflect on both our professionalism and standing in the medical community.

American Academy of Dermatology Policy on Maintenance of Certification

In recognition of the complexity of this issue and its importance to Academy members, the Academy Board of Directors establishes the following principles:

1. The Academy, through its physician leaders and volunteers will work with the ABD to assure a process that is the least burdensome for physician members.
2. The Academy will continue to develop programs, services, and activities that will assist members to meet the MOC requirements. These items include new educational programs, self-assessment tools, practice performance activities, and Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement products member physicians can use in their practices to assist them in meeting the requirements of MOC .
3. The Academy will support efforts to develop and utilize technology to permit the continuance of non-proctored exams.
4. The Academy will continue to communicate with the Academy members, the ABD, and other stakeholders to assure member and patient interests are recognized by all, and that open communication on this issue continues.

For more information and FAQ's on the MOC program, please visit the ABD website (www.abd.org) or the Academy's website (www.aad.org) and click the "Maintenance of Certification" tab.