



June 5, 2019

Dear Colleague:

On behalf of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), we are writing to let you know about new and exciting changes that ABMS and its 24 Member Boards are making to shape the next generation of continuing certification. Supporting the recommendations released in a report earlier this year by the independent, multi-stakeholder Continuing Board Certification: Vision for the Future Commission (Commission), these changes to the process of continuing certification will better assist physicians in staying up to date with advances in their fields for the benefit of the patients you serve.

In its report, the Commission encouraged ABMS Member Boards to develop programs of assessment and learning that are ongoing, provide practical feedback, and help certified physicians to improve their clinical skills. The ABMS Member Boards are fully committed to developing such programs. By the end of 2019, all ABMS Member Boards will have established or will be implementing continuing certification programs that base decisions on frequent, formative, and practice-relevant assessments that promote recent advances in the specialty. To support the Commission's vision, ABMS will adopt new continuing certification standards by 2020. In addition, ABMS is establishing collaborative task forces, which will include external stakeholders, to address the practice improvement and professionalism components of continuing certification programs that need to be better integrated with the practice environment of physicians.

You may be aware of the controversy that ABMS Maintenance of Certification programs have engendered, including legislative efforts in some states to prevent hospitals from considering recertification as a criterion for staff privileges. ABMS believes strongly that hospitals and health systems should be free, without any legal restraint, to consider certification status when rendering a decision about hospital privileges, and trusts that you will make those decisions based on your system's quality and safety needs. However, we also recognize that certification status is not the only indicator of a physician's quality, and it has been our policy for decades that it is not appropriate to grant or deny privileges solely based on certification status.

For more than 80 years, health systems like yours have trusted that a physician certified by one of the 24 ABMS Member Boards has demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and professionalism to provide safe, high-quality patient care. The changes we are working on will result in a continuing certification program that is designed to better address the rapidly advancing standards of specialty practice, and to assist you in fulfilling your mission to provide the highest quality care to patients – the ultimate beneficiaries. If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Schleiter, Vice President, Policy, Government Affairs & Strategic Engagement, at kschleiter@abms.org.

Sincerely,

Barry S. Smith, MD
Chair, ABMS Board of Directors

Richard E. Hawkins, MD
President and Chief Executive Officer