

Program for Maintenance of Certification by the American Board of Dermatology

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Maintenance of Certification (MOC) was adopted by the 24 certifying boards constituting the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) in 2000. The American Board of Dermatology (ABD) granted its first time-limited certificates in 1991 with the first cohort of diplomates entering MOC in 2006. The rationale for MOC centered on 2 propositions: First, continuing medical education (CME) alone was insufficient to assure the public that physicians were remaining up-to-date with an expanding knowledge base and offered little opportunity to engage in meaningful self-assessment and practice improvement. Second, parties external to the medical profession were focusing increased attention on physician error and quality assurance in medical practice. Maintenance of Certification, therefore, provided a mechanism of physician self-regulation in meeting public scrutiny.^{1,2}

The basic framework of MOC remains unchanged since its inception, though notable effort has been expended in simplifying the tools available. All MOC components offered directly by ABD including the MOC examination are covered by the \$150 annual fee.

Professional Standing

Diplomates attest to the status of all state medical licenses and level of clinical activity. All licenses must be unrestricted. "Clinically active" is defined as any patient care delivered within the prior 12 months. Having a restricted license or being

clinically inactive does not automatically trigger loss of certification but does result in an ABD review.

Self-assessment

Diplomates complete 300 credits (1 question=1 credit) over 10 years and complete, or attest to prior completion of, a foundational course in patient safety. Self-assessment questions are widely available from various sources, including the Question of the Week offered by the American Academy of Dermatology, Clinicopathologic Correlation and CME-designated articles offered by *JAMA Dermatology*, and Photo Challenges and Dermatopathology Diagnosis quizzes offered by *Cutis*. The ABD recognizes patient safety education satisfied as part of medical school and residency as well as various other venues. Online courses offering CME and MOC credit also are available. Credit is accrued whether the item is answered correctly or not.

Cognitive Expertise

Dermatologists take a general dermatology module and choose one subspecialty module composed of questions directed to the clinical practitioner. The general module consists of 100 image items, most of which ask for a diagnosis. The list of entities potentially included on the assessment is made available in advance for self-study. The subspecialty module consists of 50 questions targeting the specific content area selected: medical dermatology, surgical dermatology, pediatric dermatology, and dermatopathology. The actual questions also are made available in advance for self-study. Board-certified pediatric dermatologists and dermatopathologists are offered a second 50-question set of items in their specialty to allow maintenance of the second certificate. Venues include Pearson VUE testing centers and at-home or in-office tests by remote proctoring.

The ABD is considering participation in the longitudinal assessment program developed by the ABMS. If adopted, it will offer questions distributed over a many-year span in small packets, on mobile devices, and on personal computers. Diplomates will have the ability to select content and pace, including opt-out periods as life events dictate. A

AUDIO ONLINE

Dr. Thomas Horn discusses Maintenance of Certification (MOC) with *Cutis* Editor-in-Chief Vincent A. DeLeo, MD, in a "Peer to Peer" audiocast

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minimum number of correctly answered items over time will form the basis for summative assessment.

Practice Improvement

A critical element of MOC, practice improvement affords the physician the opportunity to study how patients receive care in a wide range of settings. Beginning in 2015, the ABD developed focused practice improvement modules, now totaling 21, with many more coming in the future. The free modules are offered on an online platform (<https://secure.dataharborsolutions.com/ABDermOrg/Default.aspx>) and target narrow content areas. The broad range of offerings allows diplomates to choose an area of specific interest. The participant is asked to read an overview and rationale for the module, consider reading selected references that provide the evidence base, and perform 5 chart abstractions consisting of yes or no answers to no more than 5 questions narrowly focused on the chosen topic. If a first round shows no room for improvement, the participant is finished. If a deficiency is identified, the diplomate can reflect on and implement any necessary changes in process of care and pursue a second round. These modules have been very well received, with typical diplomates' comments expressing appreciation for the ease of use and relevance to practice. Unedited and unselected reviews can be found online (<https://www.abderm.org/diplomates/fulfilling-moc-requirements/resource-vendor-list/practice-improvement/american-board-of-dermatology-focused-pi-modules-free.aspx>).

Future Direction

The ABD continuously communicates with diplomates about changes and new opportunities

in its MOC program with a goal of maximizing value and minimizing cost in terms of dollars and time.³ The directors of the ABD continue to seek feedback about the MOC program and are committed to further refinements to achieve this goal. A critical feature of the redesigned website (<http://www.abderm.org/>) allows diplomates to submit and read anonymous reviews of all tools available to fulfill MOC requirements. This thoughtful diplomate feedback informs MOC developmental efforts.

All directors and executive staff of the ABD, regardless of certificate status, pay the annual fee and participate in MOC. Active participation in MOC is made public on the ABMS website. This acknowledgment is an assurance to patients that the physician's professional standing is sound, that the physician periodically self-assesses what he/she knows, that this knowledge meets psychometrically valid standards set by dermatologists, and that physicians explore the quality of care delivered in specific practice settings. It's the right thing to do!

REFERENCES

1. Kohn LT, Corrigan JM, Donaldson MS, eds. *To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health System*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 2000.
2. Institute of Medicine. *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 2001:337.
3. American Board of Dermatology. We are simplifying maintenance of certification. here's how. <http://eepurl.com/bLd9vz>. Published January 3, 2016. Accessed May 11, 2017.