When we began Maintenance of Certification for Family Physicians (MC-FP) in 2004, we did so with the understanding that we would need to communicate regularly and effectively with you. This premise led to the complete overhaul of our website to functionally accommodate the requirements of MC-FP, the adoption of email as a means to communicate frequently and asynchronously with you, the creation of this newsletter to transmit important information in a more pleasing visual format, and the continued use of the United States Postal Service to send you critical information as we have traditionally done in the past. Over the past five years, we have listened carefully to the feedback that you have provided and have continuously improved each of these methods of communication.

Over the past year, we have carefully planned for the next iteration of our communication strategy with you, and one of the first things that we did was to obtain your advice on how we should proceed. We started with focus groups that gave us feedback on our website, and this led to several potential mock-ups and subsequent beta testing of the site with volunteer Diplomate users. The final product will be a totally new website that will debut in two phases over the course of the next year.

The first phase will include a new home page and revamping of all of our public web pages. The key ingredient in this makeover was the ability of busy users to navigate to their final destination in one or two clicks of the mouse. Inside this issue, we will introduce you to our new home page, which we hope you will find not only visually appealing, but eventually when you use it, also much more functional.

The second phase of the rollout will include a makeover of all of our content behind the Diplomate login. This includes a remake of the Physician Portfolio, revamping of the Track Your Progress feature, and more functional navigation of each of the required elements of MC-FP. This includes enhancement of the clinical simulation (ClinSim) interface, which many Diplomates have found unnecessarily cumbersome.

The most exciting part of our makeover will be the introduction of new technology to better communicate with you. Some of these innovations will appear even before our new website premieres. The first of these are Jing videos, which originate from a project developed by the TechSmith Corporation. To best describe them, it is probably easiest to use the description used by their innovators: “The concept of Jing is the always-ready program that instantly captures and shares images and videos….from your computer to anywhere.”

We have just finished creating 33 Jing videos for our website. Twelve of these videos were recorded to help Diplomates perform commonly requested tasks such as, “how do I apply for the exam” or “how do I begin Maintenance of Certification for Family Physicians (MC-FP).” The remaining 21 Jing videos were created to help Diplomates use our simulation technology, and they will be directly embedded into the ClinSim interface. Diplomates who need assistance will simply click on the “how to list” and select the item that they would like to initiate. A 15-30 second video will display the ClinSim, and they will observe the narrator actually...
A Message from the President

demonstrating the task that they wish to initiate.

One of the other exciting technologies that we will employ will be the use of social networking technology. As many of you who have explored Facebook or MySpace have learned, these technologies have greatly enhanced the ability of friends to remain connected and to learn what each other are doing. For those that choose to use this feature of our new website, the technology that we have chosen will allow us to remain connected with you, constantly updating you on activity at the ABFM, reminding you of important dates, and keeping you apprised of your progress in MC-FP.

While space does not permit me the luxury of highlighting all of the new bells and whistles on our new website, suffice it to say that we have designed it with you in mind. It will be more visually appealing; it will be easier to navigate; and it will employ multiple technologies to communicate with you in the manner that is best for you. We look forward to unveiling it to you early next year.

Our efforts at enhanced communication are not limited to just our website. Many of you perhaps participated in our first MC-FP webinar held earlier this month to help Diplomates complete their Self Assessment Modules (SAMs) in the most efficient and productive manner. This session emanated from our very successful “SAM Savvy” sessions conducted each year at the AAFP Scientific Assembly, and we hope to expand this “virtual” SAM Savvy experience in the coming year.

Much credit for our increased focus on communication needs to be given to Dr. Elizabeth Garrett, our current Board Chair. Prior to becoming Board Chair, Dr. Garrett chaired our Communication and Publications Committee for the past three years, and she has placed a high premium on communicating regularly and effectively with our Diplomates. And while I am handing out kudos, let me not forget to introduce you to our first rate Communications Department, which we feature in this issue. Their important contributions and dedication to the task of keeping you in the loop cannot go without mention.

Finally, before I leave the issue of communication, let me encourage you to read the very well-written piece on licensure by Dr. Terrence Leigh, Vice-President of Examination Administration and Credentials. The possession of a full, valid and unrestricted license is a critical element in maintaining your certification, and unfortunately, we frequently encounter circumstances where Diplomates have had certain restrictions placed on their medical licenses by their state medical boards. These restrictions result in revocation of Diplomate status until the restriction is lifted. Dr. Leigh carefully reviews this subject in an effort to underscore the important implications that license restriction has on your Diplomate status.

No one is more qualified to communicate with you about this issue than Dr. Leigh. He was recruited by Dr. Pisacano from the University of Kentucky twenty-five years ago to oversee the administration of ABFM examinations and the verification of Diplomate credentials. His wisdom, experience and dedication to the mission of the ABFM have been invaluable to me and his colleagues. While he will officially retire at the end of this month, we have been fortunate to convince him to continue on a part-time basis beginning in January. In this role, he will continue to oversee credentials and also undertake some important research that will help create the new dashboards that we will use to monitor MC-FP activity.

Before closing, let me note the enthusiastic participation that we have witnessed in our Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) Registry. Despite the shortened reporting period – the registry was approved and went live at the end of August – we have been impressed with the number of Diplomates who participated. In addition to being eligible to receive the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) PQRI bonus for 2008, these Diplomates may also choose to complete the Diabetes Performance in Practice (PPM) component of the module to receive Part IV credit for MC-FP if they are eligible to do so.

The new rules for PQRI in 2009 have just been published by CMS, and the ABFM plans to apply for approval of its registry for next year. Therefore, as an added bonus, those Diplomates who have chosen to complete the Diabetes PPM for Part IV credit can use the 2009 PQRI Diabetes Module to not only collect the post intervention data to complete the PPM, but by doing so, also qualify for the 2009 PQRI bonus from CMS, which will be going up to 2% next year. Read more about this
What is a Full and Unrestricted Medical License?

Terrence M. Leigh, Ed.D.

From its inception in 1969, the American Board of Family Practice (renamed the American Board of Family Medicine in 2005) has required physicians to hold a valid license to practice medicine. The Credentials Committee, consisting of seven physicians from the Board of Directors, is responsible for determining whether disciplinary actions by licensing authorities place a physician in violation of Board policy.

The policy, as posted on the ABFM web site, requires physicians to have a valid, full and unrestricted medical license to practice medicine in the United States or Canada, and all medical licenses held by a physician must be currently valid, full and unrestricted. The term “valid and unrestricted” means a full medical license, unlimited in scope, and not temporary. Physicians are considered to be in violation of the ABFM policy on licensure if an order, action, agreement, consent between a physician and licensing agency, or voluntary action by the physician:

- prohibits the physician from prescribing or providing care to him/herself, the physician’s immediate family, employees, or others as specified;
- requires a chaperone to be present during the examination or treatment of patients;
- limits the practice location or the number of hours of practice;
- requires permission from the licensing board to establish or change a practice location;
- limits the practice of medicine to a hospital or group practice;
- restricts the physician from seeing certain types of patients (e.g., Ob/Gyn), or patients with specified illnesses; or,
- restricts the physician from prescribing, dispensing, or administering certain drugs or narcotics.

Physicians who surrender their medical license or limit their practice, subsequent to an investigation by the state medical/licensure board or Attorney General’s Office, or other governmental or civil agency or authority, are considered to be in violation of the Board’s policy on licensure. Routine Disciplinary Action Notices from the Federation of State Medical Boards is a primary source of licensing information for the ABFM. In cases where a physician has changed his or her residence to avoid prosecution, loss of license, or disciplinary action by a state licensing agency, the Board reserves the right to revoke or suspend Diplomate status, and/or prohibit application for certification.

Questions about licensure should be presented to the Board in writing.

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opportunity inside this issue.

Let me remind all Diplomates who certified or recertified in 2005 and began MC-FP in 2006 that they must complete their Stage One requirements by the end of this calendar year. We hope that by the time most of you receive this newsletter you will have completed your requirements. However, for those that have not, please do not wait until the last minute to attempt to complete them. Our Support Center will be best able to assist you if you avoid the end of the year rush during the last week of December.

All of us at the ABFM wish you and yours a joyous Holiday Season and may your New Year be blessed with good health and prosperity.
The American Board of Family Medicine presents the new redesign of its website, www.theabfm.org, which will debut in Spring 2009. The website redesign is an important challenge for the ABFM to meet, continuing to ensure that the Board offers the best possible service to Diplomates, utilizing the latest growing technologies. With a new look and feel, improved navigation, and increased support options, the ABFM is excited to unveil its new website this spring.

The initial phase of the redesign release will include the public areas of the website. The general aesthetic is improved, with a richer palette and a more contemporary look. Site navigation has been streamlined, keeping the goal of “less-clicks-per-destination” at the forefront of development. Upcoming new features will include online live chat for anyone with questions for the Support Center, as well as webinars, videos, and possibly podcasts. Jing videos are currently under development and will launch before the new site itself. The first two groups of Jing videos will address general user support issues (i.e. “How do I apply for the exam?”) and successful negotiation of the ClinSim process.

The second phase of the web redesign project will address everything that is “behind the login,” including the Physician Portfolio, Track Your Progress, and the MC-FP activities such as SAMs, PPMs, and MIMMs. The initial redesign was facilitated in large part by ongoing feedback from the stakeholders and once again, the ABFM is asking the Diplomates for their help with the updates of these applications. To participate in an online survey, visit http://surveys.istudio.ca/abfm/takeSurvey.asp?surveyID=31 and offer your comments as to how we can make these software applications on our website work better for you.

ATTENTION: Diplomates Who Certified in 2005

If you are a Diplomate who certified or recertified in 2005, your Stage One requirements must be complete by the end of 2008 in order to remain eligible for the 10-year certification path.

You can guarantee that your eligibility for the 10-year certification path remains available to you by successfully completing your three MC-FP modules (3 SAMs or 2 SAMs and a Part IV module) by December 31, 2008!
A New Look and Feel in 2009

New features include live online chat for support!

ATTENTION: Diplomates Who Certified in 2003

Diplomates who certified in 2003 and who were the first cohort to enter MC-FP will be required to complete Stage Two by the end of 2009 to qualify for the 3-year extension to their certificates. Stage Two requirements are two Part II modules (SAMs) and one Part IV module (PPM, MIMM, or approved alternative). As many Part IV activities take anywhere from three to six months to complete, it is imperative that Diplomates who need to complete a Part IV module by the end of 2009 begin well in advance of the end of the year. The ABFM strongly suggests that Diplomates begin their Part IV activity by June of the deadline year (in this case, 2009).
Communications and the Diplomates

In the relatively short time since the transition to MC-FP, the modes of communication that the ABFM employs to reach its Diplomates have by necessity changed and grown. Just as the ABFM’s functions are shaped by swiftly changing technology, so are our opportunities for communication. Not too long ago, it would have been hard to envision the fact that email is now the predominant mode of communication over (snail/paper) mail, fax, and even for many Diplomates, the telephone.

In efforts to communicate as fully with you as possible regarding your online applications, computer-based testing, and MC-FP status and activities, we try to use as many different modes as possible. We send traditional mail, email, and this newsletter; we publish regularly in the Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine (JABFM) and in the Annals of Family Medicine; we send important notices to the AAFP State Chapters; and we keep important alerts on the front page of the ABFM website.

We recently posted our first video to the front page of www.theabfm.org, a brief message from Dr. Betsy Garrett, Chair of the ABFM Board of Directors. Also in development are short videos which will be accessible for a variety of topics from general support to MC-FP activity help, specifically help with the ClinSim as a starting point.

The ABFM is committed to trying every feasible method in this new era of multimedia communications to keep the lines of communication open between itself and our Diplomates, as well as to maintain transparency. If you have any ideas regarding how we can continue to open up fresh modes of communication, we welcome your comments via email to communications@theabfm.org.

PQRI through ABFM Activity to Continue and Expand through 2009

In August 2008, the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved the ABFM Performance in Practice Registry as one of 32 qualified registries that may submit PQRI data to CMS on behalf of its Diplomates. The Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP Extension Act of 2007 (MMSEA) authorized CMS to make PQRI incentive payments for satisfactory reporting of quality measures data in 2008.

Due to the positive response received by its Diplomates in 2008, the ABFM will apply for approval to continue as a PQRI registry participant in 2009. In addition to the Diabetes Module, a Preventive Care Module will be added in March 2009. The procedures from last year will change slightly for 2009, so it will be important to review these carefully if you plan to participate in PQRI next year.

Diplomates now have added benefit through this MC-FP activity. In short, a Diplomate can have entered PQRI data for 2008, return to start the PPM activity for MC-FP credit, enter PQRI data for 2009 (pending CMS approval of ABFM continuation as a PQRI registry), complete the PPM, and also receive CME credit for the PPM.

Physicians who meet the criteria for satisfactory submission of quality measures data for 30 consecutive patients earn an incentive payment of 2 percent of their total allowed charges for Physician Fee Schedule (PFS) covered professional services furnished during the reporting period, January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2009 (the 2009 calendar year). It is important to note that submission of quality measures data for 15 consecutive patients will not be a reporting option for registries in 2009. CMS approved financial incentives earned during 2009 reporting are scheduled to be paid in mid-2010 from the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance (Part B) Trust Fund.
Since its inception in 2004, the Communications Department has been charged with helping to convey information effectively to our Diplomates. At that time, so much of the Board’s business and Diplomate interaction was changing so quickly, and it continues to evolve on a daily basis even now, that new strategies continue to emerge for communicating with Diplomates. While the Communications Department constantly strives towards these goals, it should be mentioned that every member of the ABFM staff is equally responsible and should be commended for successful communication and interactions with the Diplomates.

Robert Cattoi, Director of Communications, also serves as the Executive Director of the Pisacano Leadership Foundation. Robert attended Southern Methodist University as well as the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is active in the community, serving on the Board of Trustees for the Sayre School and being involved for many years in youth soccer. Nash Werner, Multimedia Developer, comes all the way from sunny Honolulu to share his creative expertise. The son of professional surf photographer, Kenny Werner, Nash handles preproduction (online and print), photography, and video. Upon joining the Board in 2004, Nash optimized the website and was able to reduce the load-time by 32%. Jane Ireland moved to Lexington, KY, while still in elementary school. She attended the University of Kentucky where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Advertising. Upon graduation, Jane joined the Pisacano Leadership Foundation. In addition to her responsibilities with the PLF, Jane joined the ABFM’s Communications team when it was formed in 2004 as a communications editor. Michele Mason was raised in New York City and lived in many different regions of the country before settling in Kentucky. Michele has a double B.A. in English and History and an M.A. from the University of Kentucky.
The Online Application for the 2009 Certification, Recertification, and Sports Medicine Examinations will open on January 29, 2009.

The Online Application can be accessed at www.theabfm.org through the Physician Portfolio.

Christmas and New Year’s Support Center Hours

December 24  8:30am–5:00pm
December 25  Closed
December 26  8:30am–5:00pm
December 27  9:00am–5:00pm
December 28  9:00am–5:00pm
December 29  8:30am–9:00pm
December 30  8:30am–9:00pm
December 31  8:30am–5:00pm
January 1   Closed

To contact the ABFM Support Center call 877-223-7437 or by email at help@theabfm.org (All times Eastern Standard)