APRIL CERTIFICATION EXAM AND BEYOND

In 2012, after more than 30 years, the ABFM moved the initial certification examination from July to April. Of the 2,426 residents eligible to take the certification exam, 2,154 did so, for a participation rate of 88.8%. This reflects an increase in resident participation from last year’s July examination for which 67.4% of eligible residents sat for initial certification.

Residents who are in good standing and reasonably expected to complete training by December 31, 2012 will be eligible to apply for the November 2012 certification examination. Residents who performed unsuccessfully on the April examination will also be permitted to apply for the November examination. Residents who are expected to complete training after December 31, 2012, but no later than April 30, 2013, may also be deemed eligible to make application for the November examination at the discretion of their program director.

Residents who are in good standing and reasonably expected to complete training by June 30, 2013 will be eligible to apply for the April 2013 certification examination. Residents who are expected to complete training after June 30, 2013, but no later than October 31, 2013 may also be deemed eligible to make application for the April examination at the discretion of their program director.

A valid, full and unrestricted license is not necessary to apply for the examination. Certification will be awarded upon completion of the following requirements:

- Successful performance on the ABFM MC-FP examination
- Completion of training with verification from the program director that the resident has successfully met all ACGME requirements
- A currently valid, full and unrestricted license to practice medicine in the U.S. or Canada

In order to obtain certification, these conditions must be met by December 31 of the same year following the April exam or June 30 of the year following the November exam.
APRIL EXAM for RESIDENTS—FAQS

1. **Why has the examination moved from the summer to April?**
   By offering the MC-FP exam in April, residents have the benefit of receiving their results while still in training as well as the added benefit of having completed their certification exam before leaving their residency and entering the job market. This move will also assist program directors in meeting new ACGME program requirements when they go into effect.

2. **Is it mandatory that all third-year residents take the April exam?**
   No, it is not mandatory for all third-year residents to take the April exam.

3. **Which residents are eligible for the April exam?**
   Residents who are scheduled to complete residency no later than October 31 are eligible to sit for the April exam. In order to obtain certification, all certification requirements must be met by December 31 of the year in which they sat for the April exam.

4. **If residents do not take the April exam, when will they next be able to sit for certification?**
   The next available opportunity for those who do not sit for the April exam to sit for certification is the November exam period.

5. **Which residents are eligible for the November exam?**
   Those residents who have previously completed training, residents who were eligible for the April exam, and residents who anticipate completion of training by December 31, can sit for the November exam. All certification requirements must be met by June 30 in the year following the November exam.

6. **Can the resident sit for the certification examination if they do not have a license?**
   Yes. A resident can sit for the MC-FP Examination if they do not have a permanent medical license. However, the resident must have a full, valid and unrestricted medical license on file with the ABFM by December 31 if they sat for the previous April exam and by June 30 of the year following a November exam in order to be certified. If this information is not provided to the ABFM by these deadlines, the exam will be invalidated.

7. **What happens if the resident passes the examination but does not become licensed?**
   If a resident passes the examination and does not obtain a full, valid and unrestricted
medical license, he or she will not be considered certified until a license is obtained. A medical license must be submitted to the ABFM by December 31 of the same year for April examinees and by June 30 of the year following a November exam. If full licensure is not obtained and submitted by these deadlines, the examination will be invalidated, the exam fee will be forfeited, and a new application with the prevailing fee must be submitted for any future examination.

8. If the resident takes the examination before training is complete, is the resident certified if he or she passes the examination?

No. A resident is not considered certified until ALL requirements for certification have been met. These requirements include:

- Successful performance on the ABFM MC-FP examination
- Completion of training with verification from the program director that the resident has successfully met all ACGME requirements
- The candidate obtains a currently valid, full, and unrestricted license to practice medicine in the U.S. or Canada. Furthermore, every license held in any state or territory of the U.S. or Canada must be continuously valid, full and unrestricted whether or not the physician currently practices in the given state, territory or province.

If these requirements are not met by December 31 of the same year for April examinees and by June 30 of the following year for November examinees, the exam will be invalidated, the exam fee will be forfeited, and a new application with the prevailing fee must be submitted for any future examination.

9. What happens if the resident passes the examination but does not successfully complete training?

If a resident passes the examination, but does not successfully complete training the resident will not be considered certified until the program director verifies successful completion of training. The program director’s verification of successful completion must be submitted to the ABFM by December 31 of the same year for April examinees and by June 30 of the following year for November examinees. If verification of successful completion is not obtained by these deadlines, the examination will be invalidated and the exam fee will be forfeited. In these cases, a new application with payment of the prevailing fee will be required to sit for any future examination.
10. **How long after the completion of training does the resident have to become certified?**

Beginning in 2012, a resident has seven years after the completion of training in which to become certified. Furthermore, any physician who does not become certified within three calendar years after successful completion of residency training will be required to complete the MC-FP Entry Process in order to take the examination. This process includes:

- Completion of fifty (50) MC-FP points including at least one Part II Self-Assessment Module (SAM) and one approved Part IV activity
- Completion of 150 credits of acceptable continuing medical education
- Three (3) MC-FP Process Payments
- Submission of an application for the examination with full payment of the examination fee

As of 2012, the ABFM has implemented a new “Board Eligibility” policy which is detailed in a separate article herein.

11. **Must the resident complete any maintenance of certification activities before becoming eligible to sit for the examination?**

Residents entering family medicine residencies on or after June 1, 2012, including those residents who receive advanced placement credit for prior training in another specialty, will be the first group required to participate in the new Resident MC-FP Entry Process. This process will require the resident to complete fifty (50) MC-FP points prior to the examination which must include a minimum of one Part II Self-Assessment Module (SAM), one Performance in Practice Part IV module with data from a patient population (or an ABFM approved alternative Part IV activity with patient population data). The 50 MC-FP points can be obtained by completing additional MC-FP module(s) of choice. Residents will continue to have free access to all of the ABFM’s MC-FP assessment tools.

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**November 2012 Certification Exam Dates**

November 7, 8, 9, 10

**April 2013 Certification Exam Dates**

April 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22
BOARD ELIGIBILITY

Beginning this year, residents who successfully complete training as well as those family physicians currently eligible for certification who are not certified will have seven years in which to become certified. Those who have not successfully certified within seven years will need to successfully complete re-entry requirements before they may regain certification eligibility.

The American Board of Family Medicine defines the 7-year period of board eligibility as (1) the period that begins January 1, 2012 for any physician eligible to apply for certification prior to that date; (2) the period that begins upon the date of successful completion of an ACGME accredited Family Medicine residency training program, on or after January 1, 2012, in accordance with all ABFM policies and procedures (or upon successful application for reciprocity as defined by our reciprocity agreements); or (3) the period that begins upon the date of loss of certification on or after January 1, 2012.

In order to represent themselves as board eligible, the physician must comply with the Guidelines for Professionalism, Licensure and Personal Conduct. In addition, the physician must continue to meet the requirements for MC-FP or the MC-FP Entry or Re-Entry processes.

After expiration of the 7-year period of board eligibility, a family physician can regain eligibility only by successfully completing at least one year of additional training in an accredited family medicine residency training program (or an ABFM approved alternative) and by completing the MC-FP Re-Entry Process.

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MAINTENANCE of CERTIFICATION for FAMILY PHYSICIANS (MC-FP) is MOVING into RESIDENCY TRAINING as of JUNE 1, 2012!

Newly introduced resident requirements for initial certification will include participation in MC-FP. The first group of residents that will be required to participate in this new process will be those entering family medicine residencies on or after June 1, 2012, including those residents who receive advanced placement credit for prior training in another specialty. Residents must meet the following requirements before they will be able to sit for the examination.

Completion of fifty (50) MC-FP points prior to the MC-FP Examination, which must include:

- Minimum of one (1) Self-Assessment Module (Part II)
- Minimum of one (1) Performance in Practice Module (Part IV) with data from a patient population (or an ABFM approved alternative Part IV activity with patient population data)

Residents will access the modules and track their individual progress through their respective physician portfolios via the ABFM website at www.theabfm.org. There will be no cost associated with completing ABFM developed Part II and Part IV modules.

Multiple reasons exist for the incorporation of MC-FP into resident training, but at the forefront is the fact that the clinical simulation will be introduced into the certification examination beginning in 2015, as well as new program requirements mandating that residents must participate in quality improvement activities. Additionally, MC-FP tools can help program directors demonstrate that general competencies and program requirements are being met. Residents can access the resident portfolio to utilize the MC-FP tools after they have been entered into RTM by their Program Coordinator.

In-Training Examination

As communicated in previous newsletters, the In-Training Exam will be solely internet-based beginning in 2013. In 2011, 321 of 449 programs participated in internet-based testing for a participation rate of 71.7%. Also in 2011, 6,806 of 10,126 residents participated in internet-based testing for a participation rate of 67%, up from the rate of 32% in 2010. We will be conducting a pilot of the online internet based ITE in August 2012. Please contact Kathy Banks at kbanks@theabfm.org for information if your program wishes to participate. The ABFM urges programs not to wait until 2013 to move to internet-based testing!
Self-Assessment Modules

Asthma
Care of the Vulnerable Elderly
Cerebrovascular Disease
Childhood Illness
Coronary Artery Disease
Depression
Diabetes
Health Behavior

Heart Failure
Hypertension
Maternity Care
Mental Health in the Community
Pain Management
Preventive Care
Well Child Care

Part IV Quality Improvement Modules

Performance in Practice Modules

*Asthma, Comprehensive, Coronary Artery Disease, Depression, Diabetes, Hand Hygiene, Heart Failure, Hypertension*

*Self-Directed PPM (2012)*

Methods in Medicine Modules

*Cultural Competency*

*Information Management*

Approved Alternative Part IV Modules

The ABFM currently lists over 30 approved alternative Part IV activities, including the NCQA Physician Recognition Award for Diabetes, Heart/Stroke Prevention, and Back Pain, the NCQA Certification as a level three PCMH using 2011 criteria, the AAFP Metric Modules, ABFM approved AAFP state chapter quality improvement initiatives, and other individual institutional or professional society generated quality improvement initiatives.
**ABFM Policies and Procedures**

**Scenario 4**

Dr. Harry Carey completed a year of training at the New York University Rural Family Medicine Residency Program, Brooklyn, New York from May 5, 2009 to May 5, 2010. For personal reasons Dr. Carey decided to transfer to another program, and on May 9, 2010, he entered the Atlantic City, New Jersey, Medical Center Family Medicine Residency Program with six months of transfer credit.

On February 6, Dr. Carey applied for the April 2012 Certification Examination. Upon review of Dr. Carey’s electronic application, ABFM staff noted that the program had entered October 31, 2012 as his anticipated completion date in the Resident Training Management (RTM) System.

Ronald Trump, M.D., Program Director of the Atlantic City Medical Center Program, was contacted by email on March 1, 2012, and informed that Dr. Carey was not eligible for the April MC-FP Examination because his official completion of training could not occur before November 8, 2012. On March 5, 2012, the ABFM received a formal request from the residency for an additional 8 days of credit to allow Dr. Carey to complete his training on October 31, 2012, and thus qualify for the Spring Examination.

A meeting of the ABFM Credentials Committee was held on April 1, 2012. What policies of the ABFM are pertinent to this case and what was the likely ruling of the Committee?

**Policy: Advanced-Level Entry/Interprogram Transfers**

2. If a physician is admitted into training at an advanced level, the Program must advise the Board through an entry in the Resident Training Management System of advance placement or transfer credits. If no record for transfer or advance placement credit is created in RTM, the Program must submit the appropriate information to the Board. The Board may subsequently alter the amount of credit if there is disagreement with the amount or type of credit awarded or additional information is received. Once a resident begins a program at a defined level with a specified amount of credit, no additional credit toward certification for previous training will be authorized.
ABFM Policies and Procedures cont.

Policy: ABFM Requirement Changes for 2012 Examination and Beyond

2. Certification candidates who are applying to sit for the examination in 2012 and beyond may apply and sit for the examination without having to prove the following:
   A. A fully valid medical license
   B. Residency completion

This means candidates for certification may sit for the exam prior to obtaining full licensure and prior to successful completion of their residency program. Until the point in which the candidate provides these items, he/she will not be granted certification with the ABFM even if the candidate were successful on the examination. If he/she has not provided the required documentation by the deadline set forth by the ABFM, the examination will be invalidated, the exam fee will be forfeited, certification will not be granted, and the candidate will have to resubmit an application, with the full exam fee, to sit for the exam again.

For the April 2012 Examination, October 31, 2012 is the final deadline for completion of training.

Decision by the Credentials Committee

1. The Committee upheld the policy that once a resident begins a program at a defined level with a specified amount of credit, no additional credit toward certification for previous training will be authorized.
2. Dr. Carey will not complete training until after the October 31, 2012 deadline for the successful completion of training; thus, he must resubmit an application for the November 2012 examination.