

# Value of Certification Process in Improving Care



The American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) is committed to understanding the impact of the board certification process and continually improving the program of Family Medicine Certification (FMC) to ensure its value to patients and family physicians. We are pleased to share with you a sample of the published literature that demonstrates enhanced delivery of evidence-based services, improvements in the quality of care provided to patients, and better examination performance (as a proxy for medical knowledge). A sample of articles demonstrating outcomes associated with board certification are shared below.

## *Published Literature that Demonstrates Outcomes Associated with Certification*

### Higher Quality Care

- Board certification is associated with higher performance on a broad range of quality measures for commercially insured<sup>1</sup> and Medicare patients.<sup>2</sup>
- For patients with acute myocardial infarction, being treated by board-certified family physicians was associated with higher rates of aspirin and beta-blockers given at admission, and aspirin prescriptions at hospital discharge.<sup>3</sup>
- Patients hospitalized for heart failure treated by board-certified physicians have 5% lower mortality rates.<sup>4</sup>
- Participation in Diabetes or Hypertension Performance Improvement (PI) activities is associated with improvement in quality of care in both physician and patient reported measures.<sup>5,6</sup>
- Obtaining PI credit through the American Academy of Family Physicians' Diabetes METRIC module is associated with improvements in quality of care and in practice organization needed to provide high-quality care.<sup>7</sup>
- Obtaining PI credit through Portfolio Program projects or through other certifying boards' certification programs has shown to be associated with improved care for osteoporosis<sup>8</sup> and hypertension control for both adults<sup>9</sup> and children.<sup>10</sup>
- Over a 2-year period, participation in either a Diabetes Knowledge Self-Assessment (KSA) activity and a Clinical Self-Assessment (CSA) or a PI activity was associated with larger improvements in diabetes quality-of-care measures compared to physicians who did not participate in FMC activities.<sup>11</sup>
- Completing the Asthma KSA in a group setting where practice guidelines were emphasized has been associated with increased adherence to guidelines in practice.<sup>12</sup>

### Better Demonstration of Knowledge

- Continuous certification combined with increasing years of clinic experience has been associated with better examination performance, up until 30 years from residency graduation.<sup>13</sup>
- Family medicine residency directors report that FMC activities are helpful in building medical knowledge and assessing competencies of residents.<sup>14</sup>
- Diplomates who recently took their continuing certification examination reported that the examination preparation process resulted in learning what was relevant and beneficial to patient care and what was different from what they learn during other continuing certification activities.<sup>15,16</sup>

### Shared Learning; Satisfaction with Activities is High

- Group PI activities are associated with physicians learning from each other about how to deliver high-quality care.<sup>17</sup>
- Diplomates report high satisfaction with PI activities and report high relevance to clinical practice across activity types.<sup>18</sup>
- Diplomates report high satisfaction with KSA and CSA activities and these ratings have remained high for more than a decade.<sup>19,20</sup>

### Fewer State Medical License Board Actions

- In a study of over 120,000 family physicians from 1976 to 2017, the odds of a state disciplinary action were 65% lower for continuously certified physicians.<sup>21</sup>

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ABFM has developed a new Research Department webpage as an additional resource for you. This website provides easy access to published research focused on creating, evaluating, and maintaining cutting-edge certification methods, and to advance the scientific basis for family medicine.

**For more information on research related to Family Medicine Certification, please visit:**

- The American Board of Family Medicine [theabfm.org/research-articles](https://theabfm.org/research-articles)



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