## American Board of Dermatology

### Messages to Diplomates 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1, 2015</td>
<td>ABD Addresses Your MOC Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 2015</td>
<td>ABD MOC Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 19, 2015</td>
<td>ABD MOC Changes - Patient Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 28, 2015</td>
<td>ABD MOC Exam Survey Summary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Click on link above to view the message content.
TO: ABD Diplomates  
FROM: The Directors of the American Board of Dermatology

Dear Colleagues,

The directors of the American Board of Dermatology (ABD) have heard your concerns about the current Maintenance of Certification (MOC) standards for dermatologists. While remaining within the framework for MOC established by the American Board of Medical Specialties we want you to know what we’ve done to improve our MOC program:

**MOC requirements are burdensome.**
* What we’ve done: The Board has decreased Part IV requirements from six activities over 10 years to just two—with patient and peer surveys now optional.

**MOC is too expensive.**
* What we’ve done: There is no exam fee once participating in MOC, and 60 hours of CME credit are automatically granted through the AMA after passing the exam—with the cost covered by the Board. ABD also provides an online quality improvement activity, optional peer and patient surveys, and 25 self-assessment questions—all at no cost to diplomates.

**The exam is stressful and tests irrelevant things.**
* What we’ve done: Practicing dermatologists volunteer to develop and review test questions to ensure applicability to practice. The general dermatology module consists of clinical images and asks for the most likely diagnosis. For each of the past four years, 99 percent of examinees have passed this module. Questions that are on the subspecialty modules are published six months in advance.

**Sitting for the exam is inconvenient.**
* What we’ve done: ABD is the first certifying board to offer exam administration at home or in the office through remote proctoring.

**CME should be enough.**
* What we’ve done: ABD has made numerous CME offerings applicable for meeting MOC requirements. While CME contributes to lifelong learning, CME alone cannot assess and publicly confirm a dermatologist’s competence.

**There’s no evidence MOC results in better care.**
* What we’ve done: We understand that research studying MOC’s effect on practice is still limited, however data do show that MOC positively influences knowledge retention. ABD continually analyzes the effects of MOC requirements, and makes programmatic changes based on those findings to assure the program has value to diplomates, the public—including the government and other payers—and most importantly, our patients.

We have designed this program with your feedback in mind, and hope that you will continue to help us improve MOC. ABD will meet soon to refine the MOC program. Stay tuned…

Please visit http://www.abderm.org/moc/requirements.html to learn more about ABD’s MOC program. We welcome your feedback by writing us at abderm@hfhs.org.

Directors of the ABD:
James W. Patterson, MD, President
Marta J. Petersen, MD, President-Elect
Robert W. Silverman, MD, Vice President
Edward W. Cowen, MD
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Thomas D. Horn, MD, MBA, Executive Director
Lela A. Lee, MD, Associate Executive Director
Randall K. Roenigk, MD, Assistant Executive Director
ABD changes to MOC
June 30, 2015

TO: ABD Diplomates
FROM: The Directors of the American Board of Dermatology

The American Board of Dermatology’s (ABD) Board of Directors met in June 2015 to revisit its Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program and discuss concerns raised by diplomates.

Every voting member of the ABD Board of Directors, except for the public member, is a volunteer who practices dermatology and participates in MOC. Like you, we are also acutely aware of the many competing demands on physician time and that MOC is imperfect. We are unanimous in our conviction that the concept is sound and in the interest of our patients but realize the need to simplify the program and make it more meaningful.

The new MOC 2015 requirements issued by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) allow greater flexibility in how the program’s requirements are fulfilled. This affords ABD new opportunities to implement changes—better enabling us to ensure MOC provides value in helping diplomates stay up-to-date as medicine advances and clinical practices change.

Our goal remains to provide the best possible certification process for diplomates. As such, we will be implementing a number of tangible changes in the near future, including:

* **Practice Improvement (PI).** When Congress approved HR2 it also required quality measures for physicians that can be fulfilled by MOC. ABD recognizes the critical need to provide PI activities that will help diplomates meet these new federal requirements in meaningful ways that are less complex, low-cost or free and relevant to practice.

* **MOC Examination.** Many diplomates have expressed their approval of the current MOC exam, which combines a general dermatology, visual diagnosis section with a subspecialty section in which the questions are provided for study prior to the exam. The ABD is open to the possibility of change, in particular to an open-book examination and to adding a subspecialty module focused on cosmetic dermatology. We have instituted remote proctoring technology to allow the exam to be taken at home or in the office. We will administer a survey in the next few weeks to obtain your feedback.

* **Self-Assessment (SA).** The ABD is committed to increasing convenience, lowering cost, and offering more practice-relevant exercises. The ABD will create modules that can be used to obtain credit for both SA and PI through the completion of one exercise. We appreciate the efforts of many dermatology societies to provide SA, but recognize that not all diplomates have access to these. Thus, additional SA activities will be offered free online.

* **Patient Safety Credit.** Many diplomates find the patient safety requirement redundant with activities they have done or are doing. Consequently, the ABD will offer additional ways to fulfill the requirement, including attestation of previous
foundational education in patient safety. Moving forward, patient safety credit will also be available when certain practice improvement activities are completed.

* User-Friendly Website. A newly revamped website, www.abderm.org (http://www.abderm.org/) —to be unveiled at the end of the summer—will eventually facilitate a seamless transfer of diplomate data relating to MOC credits between the site and www.aad.org (http://www.aad.org/) in addition to enabling easier navigation among MOC resources.

While significant program revisions are underway, our two-fold mission for MOC remains: 1.) to ensure the highest standards of practice by providing diplomates with valuable experiences for learning and practice improvement; and 2.) to provide assurance to the public that certified dermatologists maintain their cognitive skills and keep up-to-date with the latest developments in the field.

The ABD routinely reassesses its MOC program. We will provide additional updates to you about further changes as they are implemented.

Sincerely,

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TO: ABD Diplomates  
FROM: The Directors of the American Board of Dermatology  

The American Board of Dermatology is pleased to announce a streamlining of patient safety requirements for its maintenance of certification (MOC) program.

We recognize that you have many highly credible opportunities for patient safety training. Consequently, diplomates must complete just one foundational* patient safety training in their career—prior to entering MOC or within the first two years of the initial MOC cycle.

We’ve greatly expanded the options for meeting this requirement—providing myriad opportunities during and after medical school and residency. Options for completing the patient safety module of MOC now include:

1. Medical school patient safety course or curriculum;
2. ACGME Clinical Learning Environment Review (CLER)-approved patient safety curriculum during residency;
3. Patient safety module performed for state licensure, hospital credentialing or employment;
5. The AAD online patient safety module and the ABMS National Patient Safety Foundation online patient safety curriculum;
6. Attendance at a live patient safety education session, such as a specialty society CME course or symposium, that broadly covers a range of dermatology patient safety topics; and
7. Participation in any other ABD-approved foundational patient safety activity.

* By foundational, we mean one covering the basic tenets of patient safety in terms of principles and practice, and which can be built upon over the course of one’s career in medicine.

If you’ve already completed and documented one of the seven patient safety options detailed above, congratulations! You are not obligated to fulfill any additional foundational patient safety module for your current MOC cycle, and in subsequent cycles, less formal engagement in patient safety activities will suffice.

This is just one in a series of refinements that we are making to the MOC program. Moving forward, we’ll also be introducing new, streamlined performance improvement activities which, completed just twice in the 10-year cycle, will also satisfy the need for ongoing patient safety activity.

We will provide additional updates about further changes as they are implemented in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

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TO: ABD Diplomates  
FROM: The Directors of the American Board of Dermatology

In July 2015, the American Board of Dermatology circulated a survey to all diplomates currently participating in our Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program to gather feedback about the MOC Exam. Please click [here](#) for a summary of the responses.

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