

# ABMS Maintenance of Certification

## One Specialist's Story



### James A. Sliwa, DO Diplomate, American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

*“MOC is our profession’s attempt to ensure that we maintain the level of knowledge needed for practice that we demonstrated when we were first certified.”*

From weekly exams in medical school, rotation exams during clinical years, boards and finally specialty certifying examinations, Dr. Sliwa says he was tested out. And for him, test taking could all be over because he holds a “lifetime” certificate. Yet twenty years later, he’s paging through textbooks, looking for answers to questions he hadn’t thought about for decades, all in preparation for the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) examination.

“I had always felt that I had an adequate grasp of current information and treatment options for conditions I commonly treated in my inpatient service, outpatient clinics and consults,” said Dr. Sliwa. “So why did I choose to do this?” The answer came one day after attending a resident lecture. “I realized that since I had completed training, the scope of information needed to practice had expanded dramatically. I had been busy seeing patients, working on committees and directing a residency program for the first time in my career wondered if I was keeping up.” The phrase he had used so many times, “lifelong learning”, suddenly had new meaning.

“I realized that this is what the MOC process is all about. I didn’t need to take an examination to keep learning, but what better way to make a commitment to the process?” Dr. Sliwa was recertified in 2005 and is now in his fifth year of this second ten-year cycle for the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He sets time aside to fulfill the MOC requirements, regularly completing self-assessment examinations that cover a diverse and broad area of rehabilitation related problems, many of which include topics that have not been of major focus for him in the past. “I also pay close attention to my continuing medical education efforts and try to direct this learning to areas I feel need improvement,” he explained. “I’ve relearned an unbelievable amount of information which keeps me focused.”

Dr. Sliwa believes the MOC process is a nice mix of continuing education and practice improvement activities directed toward maintaining physician competence. “It seems to be a logical progression in the ongoing efforts to provide the highest quality of patient care.”

*Dr. Sliwa holds general board certification in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation from the American Board of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He has been in practice for 25 years. His area of expertise is Neurologic Rehabilitation. Dr. Sliwa is currently Professor, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine.*



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