



# ABMS Maintenance of Certification

## One Specialist's Story

### Rebecca M. Howell, PhD Diplomate, American Board of Radiology

*“To patients, board certification insures a certain level of quality by the people that are going to be overseeing their care. I personally view it as a gold standard in terms of education, training and continuing of education.”*

For her own care, Dr. Howell says she would never choose to see a physician who is not board certified. “I think board certification provides some assurance that the person I am seeing has the appropriate training, is current in the field and continuing their education and that the quality care is going to be exceptional.” As a medical professional, she expects nothing less from herself or her peers.

Dr. Howell admits that after earning initial certification in Therapeutic Radiologic Physics in 2005, she didn't think much about ways to maintain it and was a bit apprehensive about what lay ahead when she first heard about the American Board of Radiology's Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program. As clear information about the MOC process became available from the board's Web site, she gained a better understanding of requirements.

“The value of MOC is that it provides documented evidence that I am involved with continuing education in my field and staying up-to-date with the technology,” said Dr. Howell. “Now that I participate, I think the expectations are reasonable.” So far, she has completed a number of self-assessment modules and will begin the quality improvement activity later this year. She tries to select a combination of refresher courses that focus on areas she does not participate in as frequently, and those which focus on new technologies. Dr. Howell also attends research sessions and professional symposiums to enhance her awareness of various issues within the field.

“Most patients may not even realize that there are physicists working behind the scenes to ensure that they receive the highest quality care,” explained Dr. Howell. “While patients may not be aware of our contribution to their radiation therapy, I think they would feel reassured to know that we meet a certain standard of training and education. After all, it is our responsibility.”

*Dr. Howell holds board certification in Therapeutic Radiologic Physics from the American Board of Radiology. She has been in practice for eight years and is currently Assistant Professor at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Her area of research interest is neutron detection and late effects from stray radiation. Dr. Howell earned her graduate degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio.*



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