



American Board
of Medical Specialties

Higher standards. Better care.®

The American Board of Medical Specialties Response to National Board of Physicians and Surgeons' Assertion of Certifying Body Equivalency

The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) strongly disagrees with the persistent and misleading assertions that the National Board of Physicians and Surgeons (NBPAS) recertification process provides a means of continuing ABMS board certification or is equivalent to ABMS board certification. Claims of equivalence to ABMS certification or that NBPAS is a means to maintain ABMS Member Board certification are misleading to the profession, and most importantly, to the public who depend upon the strength of ABMS board certification.

Unlike the ABMS Member Boards, NBPAS does not have a process for defining specialty specific standards for knowledge. It does not offer an external assessment of knowledge and skills, which the [Institute for Credentialing Excellence](#) defines as the essence of a certification program's ability to validate competence, nor is the NBPAS certificate consistent with established [American Medical Association policy on certification](#).

NBPAS does not have a requirement for improving medical practice, nor does it appear to engage in research to provide the evidence-based data supporting the value of its program and informing its continued quality improvement. In addition, ABMS questions the rigor of NBPAS' process for ensuring the professionalism of its members. ABMS has identified a number of physicians whose certificates were revoked by ABMS Member Boards and who are certified by NBPAS. The reasons for these revocations range from sexual harassment to mis-prescribing controlled substances and other professionalism issues. This type of physician behavior places patients at risk yet they maintain their NBPAS certificates.

NBPAS has recently been listed as a sample source of information regarding a candidate physician's educational attainment for hospital or health plan credentialing services. However, to be clear, neither the Joint Commission nor the National Committee for Quality Assurance has rendered any judgement about the equivalency of NBPAS's certificate to an ABMS Member Board certification.

ABMS and its Member Boards recently completed a comprehensive, transparent and collaborative process to review and enhance the Member Boards' continuing certification programs, ensuring they are both relevant to and supportive of diplomates' learning and improvement needs while providing the public with a reliable and dependable credential. These program revisions address concerns that had been expressed by diplomates about continuing certification: they offer an alternative to the high-stakes exams, provide feedback to support learning, and include processes to allow diplomates to meet requirements prior to certificate loss.

The changes to ABMS continuing certification have been well received and diplomates find them valuable: 98 percent of surveyed diplomates prefer longitudinal assessment models over the previous high-stakes exam. At the same time, ABMS continuing certification continues to honor its obligation to the public to verify that ABMS board certified physicians have demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and professionalism to provide high quality specialty care.

The value of board certification should not be understated. Patients deserve access to highly skilled specialty care and clear, unambiguous information regarding the credentials of their physicians. They expect their physicians to be up to date with the most recent medical advances in their specialties and to demonstrate their proficiency through a rigorous board certification process.

As a community, ABMS remains committed to meeting these expectations by listening to and working with our various stakeholders to protect the integrity of the credential, offering programs that support physicians, and creating a collaborative environment that offers the patients and communities we collectively serve health care that truly embodies the spirit of Higher Standards. Better Care.