A Certification Program is defined by the Institute of Credentialing Excellence as a "program designed to test the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform a particular job, and, upon successfully passing a certification exam, to represent a declaration of a particular individual's professional competence."¹ American Medical Association (AMA) policy states “that when the equivalency of board certification must be determined, the certification program must first meet accepted standards for certification that include both a) a process for defining specialty-specific standards for knowledge and skills and b) offer an independent, external assessment of knowledge and skills for both initial certification and recertification or continuous certification in the medical specialty.”²

Diplomates have a choice to be certified and from whom they receive their certification and credentials. However, not all certification programs are created equally.

When evaluating physician certification programs be sure to ask:

1. Does the program curate the knowledge, skills, and clinical judgment important to the practice of each medical specialty?
2. Does the program include an initial and ongoing assessment to verify sufficient mastery of necessary knowledge and skills?
3. Does the program involve physicians from each specialty in the development of standards and assessments?
4. Does the program develop standards of professional conduct and revoke certificates when physicians breach those standards?
5. Does the program reflect a higher standard of care than medical licensure alone?