State medical board disciplinary action is an important outcome that is directly related to quality patient care and patient safety. Studies show that physicians who successfully meet continuing certification standards are significantly less likely to receive disciplinary action.

This study explored the risk of disciplinary actions among general internists who did and did not pass the continuing certification examination.¹

- Higher performance on the ABIM Internal Medicine certification examination was strongly correlated with decreased incidence of state medical board disciplinary actions.
- Higher scores on the internal medicine continuing certification exam were associated with significantly lower disciplinary rates.
- Not passing the internal medicine continuing certification exam within 10 years of initial certification was associated with more than twice the rate of disciplinary actions over time.
- Among disciplined physicians, those who passed the internal medicine continuing certification exam had generally less severe disciplinary actions than those who did not pass.

These findings build on previous research demonstrating that:

- Physicians who pass the ABIM board certification exam are five times less likely to face disciplinary actions than physicians who are not board certified.²
- The higher interns score on their board certification exam, the less risk they have for subsequent disciplinary actions.³
- Anesthesiologists who pass both their written and oral board certification exams have a lower risk of subsequent license.⁴
- Board certified orthopaedic surgeons have a lower rate of disciplinary actions than those who are not board certified.⁵
- Board certification is associated with a lower risk for disciplinary action for physicians practicing in California.⁶
- Board certified physicians in Oklahoma are at less risk of being disciplined than those who are not board certified.⁷
- Surgeons who allow their board certification to lapse or do not recertify have a higher likelihood of a subsequent loss of license action.⁸
- Board certified anesthesiologists who met Maintenance of Certification in Anesthesiology™ (MOCA®) program requirements were less likely to be disciplined by a state medical licensing board.⁹
- Family physicians who had prior, but not current, ABFM certification were most likely to receive the most severe type of disciplinary action.¹⁰
Study Citations:


