



**American Board
of Medical Specialties**
Higher standards. Better care.®

American Board of Medical Specialties
353 North Clark Street, Suite 1400
Chicago, IL 60654
T: (312) 436-2600
F: (312) 436-2700

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Susan Morris
AVP, Communications
(312) 436-2624
smorris@abms.org

The American Board of Medical Specialties Announces 2026 Service Award Recipients

Winners will be formally recognized at ABMS Conference 2026 in September

CHICAGO – June 22, 2026 – The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the leading not-for-profit organization overseeing the certification of physicians and medical specialists in the United States, has announced the recipients of its 2026 service awards. Four individuals and one organization will be formally recognized at the ABMS Conference 2026 in Rosemont, Ill. this September.

“On behalf of the ABMS Board of Directors and the greater boards community, it is my privilege to share the names of the individuals and organization selected for recognition by the ABMS Board of Directors this year,” stated ABMS President and Chief Executive Officer Richard E. Hawkins, MD. “Each honoree has contributed their time, talent, and dedication toward enhancing the value of board certification, as well as ultimately improving the health and safety of the patients and communities we serve. Each in their own way embodies the spirit of ‘Higher Standards. Better Care’ and we are grateful to them all.”

The ABMS 2026 Service Awards and honorees are as follows:

ABMS Distinguished Service Award: David G. Nichols, MD, MBA, FAAP, FCCM

Created in 1984, the Distinguished Service Award recognizes individuals for their extraordinary and sustained contributions to the medical specialty certification and continuing certification process. As this year’s recipient, Dr. David Nichols has been a tireless advocate for the important role that board certification holds in improving the quality of healthcare.

Dr. Nichols’ many years of service include serving as Chair of the ABMS Special Committee on the Physician-Scientist, advancing ABMS’ engagement with the physician-scientist community, as well as being a member of the ABMS Board of Directors, Accountability and Resolution Committee, Standards Task Force, and International Advisory Group. One of his greatest accomplishments was as Chair of the Task Force on Governance, leading the redesign of ABMS’ governance structure to help sustain standards, maintain credibility, and enhance public trust. Dr. Nichols steered a diverse group of Member Board leaders and Public Members through a structured, iterative process of listening, design, testing, and refinement, culminating in a structure that balances central authority with Member Board autonomy and accountability to ABMS standards and policies.

Board certified by the American Board of Pediatrics (ABP) and American Board of Anesthesiology (ABA), Dr. Nichols is the ABP Emeritus President and Chief Executive Officer; Emeritus Professor of Anesthesiology, Critical Care Medicine, and Pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; and an Adjunct Professor of

Pediatrics at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. Dedicated to the importance of training, medical education, and mentorship as a means of improving children's healthcare, he has mentored nearly 60 pediatric critical care fellows. Dr. Nichols has also been committed to the importance of improving diversity, equity, and inclusivity in the ABMS community and in the healthcare delivery system, creating programming that directly addresses the needs of children throughout the country.

ABMS Distinguished Scholar Award: Daniel J. Schumacher, MD, PhD, MEd

Newly established, the ABMS Distinguished Scholar Award recognizes past [ABMS Scholars Program](#)[™] participants who have demonstrated continued scholarly work in certification for at least five years after completing the program. Honorees exhibit exceptional leadership, execute high-quality research impacting a field of specialty education and certification, and demonstrate a commitment to ongoing engagement with the specialty certification community.

Dr. Daniel Schumacher, the first-ever recipient of this award, was a member of the 2014-2015 ABMS Scholars inaugural cohort and is board certified by ABP. Currently a Tenured Professor of Pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Dr. Schumacher focuses on research about competency-based medical education and assessment, particularly as it relates to initial certification. His service as an ABMS Scholar underpins a career marked by rigorous, high-quality, and widely published research that has been influential in advancing certification approaches within pediatrics and beyond.

ABMS Edward M. Jackson, MD – Derrick T. Vail, MD Award: Daniel J. Cole, MD

Named for Drs. Derrick T. Vail and Edward M. Jackson, two ophthalmologists credited with creating the concept of specialty board development in the 20th century, this award is presented to individuals or ABMS Member Boards for extraordinary national or international contributions to the broad field of medical specialty education, evaluation, or [certification](#), including [continuing certification](#). This year's recipient, Dr. Daniel Cole, demonstrated exceptional leadership, integrity, and service during a pivotal period in the evolution of continuing certification, supporting both the ABA as its Past President and ABMS as a member of the Board of Directors.

At a time when certification efforts faced intense national scrutiny and critical debate, he played an important role in advancing the longitudinal approach to assessment that later influenced certification practices across the Member Boards, helping develop the updated certification standards. President of the Anesthesia Patient Safety Foundation, Dr. Cole is a Professor of Clinical Anesthesiology in the Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine and Vice Chair for Professional and Business Development at the David Geffen School of Medicine, University of California, Los Angeles. He is board certified by the ABA.

ABMS Health Care Quality and Patient Safety Award: Susan M. Edgman-Levitan, PA

Established in 2011, the ABMS Health Care Quality and Patient Safety Award recognizes extraordinary national or international contributions to the fields of quality and patient safety, with a particular focus on physician performance, professionalism, and the improvement of clinical performance in practice. This accolade is given to individuals or Member Boards that have significantly contributed to the knowledge or practice of healthcare quality improvement (QI) or patient safety, are active in diplomate/physician education and certification, or that have significantly altered the direction of QI research or policy.

This year's honoree, Ms. Edgman-Levitan, has contributed to national and international efforts to improve healthcare quality and patient safety through her work advancing patient and consumer engagement. Serving since 1995 as a Primary Investigator on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality funded Consumer Assessments of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) grant, she has worked to develop all the national CAHPS patient experience surveys mandated by organizations including the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the National Committee for Quality Assurance, and other organizations. Ms. Edgman-Levitan's efforts, including serving as a member of the Lucian Leape Institute, have helped to establish a national framework for measuring patient experience, patient safety, and integrating patient perspectives into QI efforts.

Her service with the American Board of Internal Medicine Foundation, American Board of Internal Medicine Council, the Primary Care Collaborative, and other national initiatives reflects her longstanding focus on incorporating the patient voice into healthcare decision-making. In addition, her ongoing work as a lecturer at Harvard Medical School, an Instructor at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, and her leadership as Executive Director of the John D. Stoeckle Center for Primary Care Innovation at Massachusetts General Hospital demonstrate her continued engagement with national efforts to improve healthcare quality and patient safety.

ABMS Innovation Award: The American Board of Anesthesiology

The ABMS Innovation Award was created to recognize individuals, teams, or organizations that have demonstrated innovative advancements in a field of medical specialty education and/or the specialty certification process. Their innovations must demonstrate both impact and significance, have sustainability, offer potential for scalability, and provide measurable outcomes.

The 2026 and first-ever recipient, the ABA has advanced approaches to assessment within medical specialty certification through the development and implementation of [MOCA Minute®](#), which provides diplomates with a longitudinal assessment consisting of 120 multiple-choice assessment questions per year (30 per quarter), a defined period for response, and immediate feedback. Launched in 2016, this approach represents a significant alternative to the traditional single, high-stakes examination by offering a more continuous, educationally meaningful, and diplomate-centered method of assessment. Born out of this innovation and its demonstrated success, all 24 ABMS Member Boards have adopted some form of longitudinal assessment as part of their continuing certification programs, underscoring the ABA's foundational role in shaping the evolution of certification assessment.

ABA Executive Director Michele Pore, MBA, CAE, and the board's representative on the ABMS Board of Directors, Robert Gaiser, M.D., will accept the award on behalf of the ABA, joining the other four 2026 ABMS honorees receiving their awards at [ABMS Conference 2026](#) this September.

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About ABMS

Established in 1933, the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) is responsible for the creation of standards overseeing physician certification in the United States. Dedicated to improving the quality of care to the patients, families and communities they serve, the [24 ABMS Member Boards](#) develop educational and professional standards and programs of assessment to certify physicians and medical specialists. More than one million physicians and medical specialists are certified by one or more of the ABMS Member Boards in one or more of 38 specialties and 89 subspecialties. For more information about ABMS, [visit abms.org](http://visit.abms.org) or call (312) 436-2600.