ABIM announces plans to offer physicians MOC assessment options in January 2018

Physicians will be able to choose Maintenance of Certification (MOC) assessment formats that meet their needs.

Philadelphia, PA, May 5, 2016 – The American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) today announced plans to begin offering a new Maintenance of Certification (MOC) assessment option in January 2018. ABIM’s assessment taken every 10 years will remain available as a second option, and both options will reflect the input ABIM has received from a diverse range of physicians and stakeholders over the past year.

The new option will:

- Take the form of shorter assessments that doctors can choose to take on their personal or office computer—with appropriate identity verification and security—more frequently than every 10 years but no more than annually;
- Provide feedback on important knowledge gap areas so physicians can better plan their learning to stay current in knowledge and practice; and
- Allow physicians who engage in and perform well on these shorter assessments to test out of the current assessment taken every 10 years.

Those who meet a performance standard on shorter assessments will not need to take the 10-year exam again to remain certified.

Among all of the Assessment 2020 Task Force recommendations, the one suggesting shorter, less burdensome assessments has generated the most enthusiasm among physicians. Initially, this new option will be available for physicians maintaining certification in Internal Medicine, and, possibly, one or two subspecialties starting in January 2018. Using feedback from these early adopters, ABIM expects to make this option available to additional subspecialties as quickly as possible over subsequent program cycles.

As ABIM works to operationalize this new option, it will engage in conversations with the internal medicine and specialty community to refine details about the new assessments. This feedback will help inform future improvements and support physicians’ goals of continuous professional development and improved patient care.

“ABIM Board Certified physicians will soon have a choice of pathways to maintain their certification over the course of their career,” said Richard. J. Baron, MD, President and CEO of ABIM. “At a time when online credentials with no standards behind them are proliferating in many disciplines, doctors have told us they want us to continue to provide an MOC credential that says to their peers and to the public, in a credible and substantial way, that they are maintaining the knowledge they need to practice medicine. By offering shorter assessments that they could take at home or at the office, we hope to lower the stress and burden that many physicians have told us the current 10-year exam generates.”

Physicians with certifications that expire before the new assessment option is offered in their specialty will still need to take and pass the current exam in order to maintain their certification. Most of these physicians will be taking an exam based on a blueprint updated for relevance and featuring other enhancements, including detailed score reports. They will not have to take another assessment for 10 years.

ABIM will continue to:

- Seek physician input about MOC assessment content through the blueprint review process;
- Study the feasibility of offering “open book” assessments;
- Investigate ways to provide secure assessments at a physician’s home or office;
- Determine how best to offer physicians immediate feedback on their assessment performance and learning activities to help them improve; and
- Work with societies to expand the number of continuing medical education (CME) activities available for MOC credit.
Before the new assessment option is implemented, there will be a public comment period about the potential changes. ABIM expects to provide more specific details about what the alternative assessment option will look like no later than December 31, 2016.

“ABIM is grateful for all of the suggestions and guidance that we have received from physicians over the past year,” Dr. Baron said. “Already more than 9,000 ABIM Board Certified physicians have shared their opinions with us through a survey and hundreds more are helping ABIM by participating in our MOC blueprint review and open book study. As we move forward with the new proposed assessment pathway, we will seek additional input from physicians, the public and other stakeholders. Together, we will build an assessment program that better reflects how physicians practice medicine today while preserving a credential in which the profession can take pride and the public can place trust.”

Learn more about these efforts and opportunities to get involved by visiting our recently expanded Transforming ABIM site.

For media inquiries, contact Erin Frantz at press@abim.org.

About ABIM
For 80 years, certification by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) has stood for the highest standard in internal medicine and its 20 subspecialties and has meant that internists have demonstrated—to their peers and to the public—that they have the clinical judgment, skills and attitudes essential for the delivery of excellent patient care. ABIM is not a membership society, but a non-profit, independent evaluation organization. Our accountability is both to the profession of medicine and to the public. ABIM is a member of the American Board of Medical Specialties. For additional updates, follow ABIM on Facebook and Twitter.