



February 7, 2016

Dear ACP members,

I am writing to update you on the American Board of Internal Medicine's (ABIM) Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program and ACP's efforts to improve the program. As noted in my last letter to you about MOC in October 2015, ABIM's Assessment 2020 Task Force report outlined a series of recommendations for significant changes in all components of MOC. The recommendations reflect many changes that ACP has been advocating for over the past several years, and we look forward to hearing decisions from the ABIM Board of Directors about which recommendations will be approved and implemented, and over what timeline.

One of the issues ACP has been most concerned about is the secure examination. In our discussions with ABIM we have stressed: (1) making the examination more relevant to practice; and (2) addressing any factors that might be contributing to the relatively high failure rate. ABIM made changes to the most recent internal medicine MOC examination administered in October that addressed both of these issues, and there is positive progress to report. Specifically:

- The "blueprint" for this examination (i.e. the list of topics covered in questions) was modified based on a survey administered to a sample of ACP members and other ABIM diplomates, who were asked about the frequency and importance of specific topics. The intent of the survey was to make the examination more relevant to practice through eliminating questions that focused on topics that were obscure and/or not relevant to most practicing internists. We have received feedback from many individuals who took the examination noting that the questions seemed much more relevant to practice than they had been in the past.
- The process for determining the passing standard was modified. As part of our feedback to ABIM, we were concerned that the past process for setting the passing standard (using the Angoff method, an established approach for setting a passing standard) typically used the question writers rather than an independent group of physicians who were not involved with writing the questions. ABIM responded to our concerns by changing its process so that the passing standard was set by both those involved in question writing and a group of practicing clinicians who did not write the questions.
- ABIM has reported a notably higher pass rate for the 2015 Internal Medicine MOC examinations, a result we suspect is due in large part to the revised blueprint and the modified process for setting the passing standard on the October 2015 administration of the exam. Although there is no guarantee that this positive trend will continue, we are cautiously optimistic.

We welcome these shorter-term improvements as they address important concerns about the secure examination until the broader and longer-term recommendations from Assessment 2020 are approved and can be implemented.

We were also pleased to see that ABIM has extended its suspension of the Part 4 (practice improvement) as well as the proposed patient safety and patient voice requirements another two years, through the end of 2018. This will allow ABIM time to determine what type of role (if any) it should have in assessing practice performance, particularly relative to healthcare systems and to requirements from both public and private payers.

At present, ABIM has committed to continuing to address concerns about MOC through a process of “co-creation” that involves the physician community, with input from ACP and other stakeholder organizations representing internal medicine and its subspecialties. ABIM recently announced that it is expanding the blueprint review process to include subspecialty exams. We encourage subspecialists to participate in this review and provide feedback directly to ABIM about the content of the exam to ensure your voice is heard. More information about how to log in and participate in blueprint reviews is available at ABIM’s website, www.abim.org/br.

We are encouraged that progress is being made to improve the MOC program, and pleased that physicians have the opportunity to provide feedback directly to ABIM regarding the exam through the blueprint reviews. We will continue to make MOC a priority for the College, and we will continue to provide input on behalf of ACP members with the goal of maximizing the relevance and benefit of MOC while minimizing its burden.

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