EXPANDED MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION: A TOOL FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

The American Board of Medical Genetics (ABMG) was established over 25 years ago to assist the field of medical genetics in its efforts to achieve recognition as a unique medical specialty. The ABMG was assigned the responsibility for accreditation of training programs and certification of trainees in the several specialties of genetics. Subsequently, the ABMG achieved recognition by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) as one of the 24 medical certification boards that meet the “gold standard” of training and certification. Over the subsequent years, ABMG training and certification standards have evolved to meet the changing needs of the medical genetics field and the changing requirements for continued recognition by the ABMS. ABMS-defined changes in certification have included the introduction of time-limited certification in 1993, Recertification in 2000, and significant changes to Maintenance of Certification in 2006.

The impetus for the change in maintenance of certification requirements for diplomates is based on the increasing pressure for evaluation of excellence, or at least competence, within the medical regulatory community. Clinical geneticists may be more aware of the pressures on the practice of medicine than the laboratory or PhD geneticists may be, but in general, members of the medical regulatory community must now prove that they provide the best care. Issues of patient safety, ranking of hospitals/health systems, and insurance and governmental agencies wanting to get what they consider the best deal for their money have created a need to demonstrate continued excellence.

Through the coordination of ABMS, the member medical boards must accept this challenge by endeavoring to make board certification and maintenance of certification the surrogate for defining “the excellent physician.” Thus, diplomates who maintain their board certification are viewed by various agencies as proof positive of those diplomates’ investment value in terms of both client health and money. In addition, there have been a significant number of informative articles published in the past several months that discuss the need for Maintenance of Certification (MOC) activities and the value MOC provides to the individual diplomat who participates in these activities. A bibliography of some of these publications is appended at the end of this letter.

ABMS has positioned itself within a growing number of committees, commissions, and other organizations as representative of the medical community’s dedication to excellence. Thus the individual boards must each provide comparable standards of excellence for their diplomates. To
maintain the clinical reputation of its diplomates, the ABMG has developed a program of activities that meet the requirements developed by the 24 member boards of the ABMS. Each board has designed activities for the various parts of the EMOC program. While specific activities may differ among boards, all must meet the approval of the ABMS. Activities are grouped into four parts:

- Part I: Professionalism
- Part II: Self Evaluation and Life Long Learning
- Part II: Cognitive Expertise
- Part IV: Performance in Practice

Every diplomate with time-limited certification must adhere to the new requirements for maintaining certification, no matter what the rules were at the time his or her certification was initiated. Diplomates with lifetime certification are encouraged to participate in the maintenance of certification activities as well. The ABMG is requiring all directors of training programs to participate in this process. Many medical groups, hospitals, third-party payers, and licensing organizations are beginning to require participation in this activity. Thus it is expected that all clinically active diplomates of the ABMG will eventually participate in the EMOC program.

Over the last 18 months, the ABMG has been providing information to diplomates regarding the development and roll out of the maintenance of certification program designed for the genetics community. Updated information on the EMOC program is outlined in the ensuing pages.

### Expanded Maintenance of Certification: Important Program & Fee Information

The time for implementing the EMOC program is now at hand. **Diplomates will be required to begin participation in EMOC starting in 2007.** There will be a transition period that will introduce all currently certified diplomates into the required program. Based on the year of initial certification, diplomates will have a set of specialized transitional requirements to follow. A description of each component of the EMOC plan and the transitional requirements for each group of diplomates (based on year of certification) are provided in this newsletter. This information will be posted on the ABMG website along with a set of frequently asked questions. Together this information should provide each diplomate with a clear understanding of his or her responsibilities in the EMOC program.

Every diplomate currently active in the existing MOC program (certified in 1993 and 1996) or currently holding an initial time-limited certificate (certified in 1999, 2002/3, and 2005) is required to transition into the new program. The schedule for that transition is listed in a table at the end of this newsletter.

Individuals with lifetime certificates are encouraged to enter into the EMOC program as a way to maintain their level of excellence and provide documentation of that continued excellence to other agencies. Each diplomate who enters into the EMOC program will begin at Year 1 of a 10-year cycle (equivalent to a new certificate holder).
ABMG has developed a web-based account for each diplomate to use to monitor and record his or her progress in EMOC. Upon registration for EMOC, diplomates will be assigned an access code that will permit them access to their account. A record of completed activities will be maintained as well as a list of available activities and necessary forms.

Participation in EMOC will require payment of a $300 per year fee to cover the costs of the program. The fee will replace voluntary dues for diplomates participating in EMOC. An additional charge will also be required for participation in the Part III examination. Additional expenses may be incurred when applying for CME credits and Part IV modules from other organizations.

**EMOC Summary**

**EMOC Time Frame:** 10-year cycle beginning immediately after certification is earned. No grace period.

**Required Activities:** Divided into four parts, each with its own set of requirements and time frame as outlined below.

**Part I:** Professionalism  [Submission of documents must take place in years 1 and 5]

- For MDs: Continuous licensure in all jurisdictions must be verified
- For PhDs: Letter of Attestation from academic or business peers/supervisor must be submitted
- For every diplomat: Biographical data on personal web homepage must be updated

**Part II:** Continuing Education and Self-Assessment

- **250 Category 1 CMEs** (or their equivalent for PhDs) must be accrued over a period of 10 years. At least 50% of the CMEs must be in genetics. Diplomates must track their CMEs as they will be audited in years 4-5 and 8-9.

- **Literature Modules:** These web-based, open-book, and non-proctored modules will be more concise versions of the current literature review. A pre-reading test and post-reading test are required to help diplomates assess their acquisition of knowledge. Only the post-reading test will count. The post-reading test can be taken as often as necessary to pass. A message rather than a score is recorded when diplomates pass the post-reading test. Participation in 3 of 5 offered modules must take place during the 10-year cycle. Each module will be accessible for only a three-year period of time.

**Part III:** Assessment of Cognitive Expertise  [Exam must be passed once during years 8-10]

The specialty-only certification-type examination will be computerized and proctored at a testing center. The examination must be passed only once during years 8 to 10 of the
10-year cycle. The examination may be taken again, if necessary, to achieve a passing score. The examination will be available once a year.

Part IV: Practice Improvement  [Must participate in three activities during the 10-year cycle]

- The activities will assist diplomates in evaluating their practice, identifying areas that may need improvement, and documenting any improvements.
- Activities are not graded but participation is mandatory.
- For clinical geneticists: modules will be developed by ACMG and other organizations; an approved list of modules will be made available.
- For laboratory specialties: activities will center on the recording of lab inspections, licensure, and proficiency testing data.
## Transition Timetable

### Certification granted in 1993:

- **2007:** Submit Part I documentation; begin paying yearly fees
- **2007-2009:** Complete 25 CME credits
- **2007-2009:** Pass one (1) Part II module
- **2008-2009:** Pass Part III specialty EMOC examination once during this period
- **2010-2019:** New 10-year cycle begins

### Certification granted in 1996:

- **2008:** Submit Part I documentation; begin paying yearly fees
- **2008-2009:** Complete 25 CME credits
- **2008-2009:** Pass Part III specialty EMOC examination once during this period
- **2010-2019:** New 10-year cycle begins

### Certification granted in 1999:

- **2007:** Submit Part I documentation; begin paying yearly fees
- **2007-2009:** Complete 25 CME credits
- **2007-2009:** Pass one (1) Part II module
- **2008-2009:** Pass Part III specialty EMOC examination once during this period
- **2010-2019:** New 10-year cycle begins

### (A) Certification granted in 2002 or 2003 and (B) Diplomates recertified [for 10 years] in 2002:

- **2007:** Submit Part I documentation; begin paying yearly fees
- **2007-2012:** Complete 125 CME credits
- **2007-2012:** Pass two (2) Part II modules
- **2010-2012:** Take one (1) Part IV module
- **2010-2012:** Pass Part III specialty EMOC examination once during this period

### Certification granted in 2005:

- **2007:** Submit Part I documentation; begin paying yearly fees
- **2010:** Re-submit Part I documentation
- **2007-2015:** Complete 200 CME credits
- **2007-2015:** Pass three (3) Part II modules
- **2010-2015:** Take two (2) Part IV modules
- **2013-2015:** Pass Part III specialty EMOC examination once during this period

### Certification granted in 2007:

- **2008:** Submit Part I documentation
- **2009:** Begin paying yearly fees
- **2013:** Re-submit Part I documentation
- **2008-2017:** Complete 250 CME credits
- **2008-2017:** Pass three (3) Part II modules
- **2010-2017:** Take two (2) Part IV modules
- **2015-2017:** Pass Part III specialty EMOC examination once during this period

### (A) Certification granted in 2009 or (B) Achieving recertification [original certification in 1993, 1996, or 1999]:

- **2010:** Submit Part I documentation; continue paying yearly fees [fees not applicable for new diplomates]
- **2011:** New diplomates must begin paying yearly fees
- **2015:** Re-submit Part I documentation
- **2010-2019:** Complete 250 CME credits
- **2010-2019:** Pass three (3) Part II modules
- **2010-2019:** Take three (3) Part IV modules
- **2017-2019:** Pass Part III specialty EMOC examination once during this period


