

# AMERICAN BOARD OF DERMATOLOGY



## Some General Information and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About Status of Lifetime and Time-limited Certification and Maintenance of Certification in Dermatology (MOC-D)

### **I- BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW**

#### **1. What is the difference between Recertification and Maintenance of Certification?**

From 1991-2006 the ABD renewal or recertification process consisted of a requirement to have 1) a full, valid, and unrestricted license to practice medicine, 2) 90 hours of CME credits in the 3 years prior to taking a recertification examination, 3) an ethics letter and hospital affiliation letter, and 4) the recertification examination. This examination was initially an open-book examination taken on-line. Requirements to ensure the identity of the person taking the examination have required the ABD to administer a secure proctored, closed book examination beginning in 2010.

In 2006 the recertification process evolved into the Maintenance of Certification in Dermatology (MOC-D) program, a program of continuous professional development. This allows the Diplomate to demonstrate the degree of competency shown when the initial certifying examination was passed after completing residency. This *continuous* program of MOC-D is in distinction to the bolus of CME and an examination which made up the recertification process.

#### **2. What is the MOC-D (Maintenance of Certification-Dermatology) program?**

MOC-D is a program which offers assurance to the public that the degree of competency the Diplomate evidenced when awarded initial certification in Dermatology is maintained at a high level during continuing professional life. It consists of 4 components, which can be briefly explained as follows:

*Component 1* is evidence of continuing professionalism in maintaining a valid, unrestricted license to practice medicine in the United States or Canada. (License Attestation)

*Component 2* demonstrates that the Diplomate has kept abreast of current medical knowledge with self-assessment and self-learning (CME) activities. (Patient Safety Self-Assessment, CME Attestation, Self-Assessment Exercises)

*Component 3* is a cognitive examination. Successful completion of this examination is evidence that the Diplomate has remained current with appropriate medical knowledge.

*Component 4* assures the public that the Diplomate is using this medical knowledge to improve the quality of care provided to patients. (Patient Communication Survey, Peer Communication Survey, Practice Assessment QI)

Specific details of these four components can be found on the ABD website at [www.abderm.org](http://www.abderm.org).

#### **3. What are the differences between lifetime certificates and time-limited certificates?**

Between 1933 and 1990, certificates in Dermatology issued by the ABD had no expiration date. These certificates were issued by the ABD in good faith and these certificates will not change as long as the Diplomate maintains a full, valid, unrestricted license to practice medicine. Time-limited certificates require engagement in a renewal process during a 10-year period. The first year that the ABD issued a time-limited certificate was in 1991. All 24 boards comprising the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) issue time-limited certificates.

#### **4. As a graduating resident taking and passing the ABD certifying examination, when do I enter MOC-D and when must I begin paying the annual MOC fee and collecting CME credits?**

Immediately upon passing the ABD certifying examination, you enter MOC-D and begin paying the \$150 MOC-D annual fee. Beginning in 2009, it will be necessary for you to begin collecting 25 CME credits (dermatology related, AAD or AMA approved) per calendar year starting the year immediately following certification. Note that 40 hours of CME is required for years 2006, 2007, and 2008. You must maintain 25 hours of CME every year, complete a patient safety self-assessment exercise, complete three (3) self-assessment exercises over the 10 year cycle, and complete Component 4 (under development).

#### **5. I am doing a fellowship following my dermatology residency. When does MOC-D start for me?**

You enter MOC-D immediately upon passing the ABD certifying examination. However, during your fellowship year, you are exempt from having to earn CME for MOC-D and from paying the annual \$150 MOC-D fee. After your fellowship is complete, you are required to obtain 25 hours of CME credits (dermatology related, AAD or AMA approved) per calendar year and begin paying the annual \$150 fee. For example, if you take the certification examination in August 2009 and your fellowship is complete on June 30, 2010, then your CME accrual begins January 1, 2011 and the annual fee is due December 31, 2010.

## **II- MOC-D AND LIFETIME CERTIFICATE HOLDERS**

### **1. What happens to my lifetime certification whether I pass or fail the MOC-D examination?**

Your lifetime certification cannot be revoked, even if you were not to pass the MOC-D examination. If you take and pass the MOC-D examination you will be considered “recertified”. In order to remain recertified ten years hence, you must enter Maintenance of Certification - Dermatology (MOC-D) ([http://www.abderm.org/moc/moc\\_requirements.html](http://www.abderm.org/moc/moc_requirements.html)) and you must take another MOC-D exam within ten years. No matter what you decide, your original certification remains valid.

### **2. As a lifetime certificate holder, if I pass the MOC-D examination am I required to participate in the MOC-D process (25 hours of CME/year, a patient safety self-assessment exercise, 3 self-assessment exercises, and quality improvement)?**

As a lifetime certificate holder, if you take and pass the MOC-D examination, you are not required to participate in the MOC-D program, but it is in your best interest to do so as an indication of your continued commitment to maintaining evidence of competence in Dermatology.

For a variety of reasons however, an increasing number of ABD lifetime certificate holders are voluntarily entering the MOC-D program. The Joint Commission is encouraging hospitals to show evidence that they are evaluating the ACGME’s 6 competencies as a part of their credentialing process. Some payors in health care (HMOs, insurance companies, the Government) also require similar evidence. Activity in a MOC program fulfills these requirements. Similarly, the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) is considering a program in which state medical boards will require physicians to enter into a Maintenance of Licensure (MOL) program, requiring periodic examinations to maintain licensure. This program is being very actively evaluated by the FSMB, and can be compared to periodic renewal required for pilot’s and driver’s licenses. The FSMB has stated that involvement in a MOC program will likely fulfill this requirement, without the need for an additional examination. For these reasons, and others, a significant number of lifetime certificate holders are involved in MOC.

If you do participate in MOC-D, your official ABMS designation will be: “Lifetime certificate holder, Recertified 2009, actively participating in the MOC-D program.” For those who don’t participate in the MOC-D program, the ABMS designation would state, “Lifetime certificate holder, Recertified 2009”, but it would not say actively participating in the MOC-D program which many of the payors and credentialing bodies are looking for.

### **3. As a lifetime certificate holder, why should I take the MOC-D examination? What are the advantages?**

The advantage of taking the MOC-D examination is to demonstrate that you are maintaining the competence which you demonstrated by successfully passing the initial certifying examination. This demonstrable evidence of continued competence is available to patients, to payors, and to credentialing bodies such as hospital staffs

and professional organizations. Moreover, the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) has proposed a Maintenance of Licensure (MOL) program requiring periodic examination; the MOC-D program will likely fulfill the examination requirement.

#### **4. Will I have to participate in two MOC programs if I have primary certification in Dermatology as well as sub-certification in Pediatric Dermatology or Dermatopathology?**

Subspecialty MOC-D sub-certification will be linked to primary maintenance of certification. However, details are being worked out and will be published in the near future.

### **III- THE EXAMINATION**

#### **1. How long does it take to complete the MOC-D examination? What are the modules and how many questions on each module?**

The examination consists of a required 100-question general dermatology module and one 50-question module selected from the following choices: medical dermatology, surgical dermatology, pediatric dermatology, or dermatopathology. The examination is clinically-oriented and is representative of the challenges presented by individual patients seen in the clinical practice of dermatology, and does not replicate the original certifying examination. The general dermatology module will consist entirely of images with the accompanying question, "The most likely diagnosis is". A list of 150 conditions from which the image questions will be drawn is available in your profile when login to the ABD website. For the self-selected 50 question modules, 75-90 questions (without the answers) are posted in your profile for study as well.

Starting in 2011, the examination will be given at the Pearson VUE testing centers located in each state.

The amount of time it takes to complete the examination varies from person to person; however, you must finish the examination within the 3 hour allotted time.

#### **2. Do you have recommendations for study materials for the MOC-D examination?**

The majority of the questions come from current dermatology text books and the current and classic dermatologic literature. The questions ask for the application of basic dermatologic knowledge, applied in a clinical focus.

#### **3. What CME is available for completing the cognitive examination?**

Diplomates who successfully complete the cognitive examination are eligible to receive 25 AMA PRA Category I CME credits by providing a copy of the ABD certificate or notification letter, a completed form from the AMA website (<http://www.ama-assn.org/go/directcredit>), and payment of \$30 for an AMA member or \$75 for a non-AMA member.

### **IV- THE ANNUAL FEE**

#### **1. Is the \$150 annual MOC-D fee voluntary? Can I pay \$1500 right before I take the examination instead of paying \$150 a year?**

The \$150 MOC annual fee is not voluntary, but is required and necessary to support the program. Diplomates in the MOC-D process will be required to pay the \$150 MOC fee annually (deadline December 31 each year). Deferring the fee to the end of the 10-year cycle is no longer allowed.