

# Maintenance of Certification in dermatology: Requirements for diplomates

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The following is a journal-based CME activity presented by the American Academy of Dermatology and is made up of four phases:

1. Reading of the CME Information (delineated below)
2. Reading of the Source Article
3. Achievement of a 70% or higher on the online Case-based Post Test
4. Completion of the Journal CME Evaluation

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##### Authors

Dr Horn is Executive Director of the American Board of Dermatology. The other authors of this journal-based CME activity have reported no relevant financial relationships with commercial interest(s).

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#### Learning Objectives

After completing this learning activity, participants should be able to identify the requirements for participation in Maintenance of Certification for dermatologists.

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Since 2006, after completing a cognitive certifying or recertifying examination, dermatologists are automatically enrolled into Maintenance of Certification (MOC) and can access a personalized electronic table (at [www.abderm.org](http://www.abderm.org)) that presents the requirements over the 10-year cycle. On this web site, diplomates can also pay the annual fee and attest to completion of the various components. Clicking on hyperlinks in the table launches explanations of the requirements. A hyperlink below the table takes the reader to the various resources approved for completion of the MOC requirements. There is a login tab in the upper left corner with a login help feature below. Clicking on the MOC tab will bring up the table. The timeline is specific to the individual. (J Am Acad Dermatol 2013;69:13.e1-4.)

**Key words:** American Board of Dermatology; American Board of Medical Specialties; dermatology; maintenance of certification; maintenance of licensure.

## HOW DOES A DIPLOMATE PARTICIPATE IN MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION?

### Key point

- **A table exists ([www.abderm.org](http://www.abderm.org)) for documentation of completion of the various Maintenance of Certification components**

Since 2006, after completing a cognitive certifying or recertifying examination, dermatologists are automatically enrolled into Maintenance of Certification (MOC) and can access a personalized electronic table (at [www.abderm.org](http://www.abderm.org); Fig 1) that presents the requirements over the 10-year cycle. On this web site, diplomates can also pay the annual fee and attest to completion of the various components. Clicking on hyperlinks in the table launches explanations of the requirements. A hyperlink below the table takes the reader to the various resources approved for completion of the MOC requirements. There is a login tab in the upper left corner with a login help feature below. Clicking on the MOC tab will bring up the table. The timeline is specific to the individual.

## PART 1: LICENSURE AND PROFESSIONAL STANDING

### Key point

- **Annual requirements consist of state licensure attestation, reporting clinically active status, and payment of the annual Maintenance of Certification fee**

Before January 31 of each year, the MOC-enrolled diplomate must attest that all state medical licenses are current and unrestricted and inform the American Board of Dermatology (ABD) that he or she is clinically active (defined as having provided any patient care, in any setting, in the preceding 24 months) through an online attestation process found on the diplomate's web-based MOC table. The \$150 annual MOC fee may be paid at any time during the calendar year, but is due no later than December 31. The fee is used to administer the MOC program, including ensuring psychometrically and scientifically valid, reliable examinations.

## PART 2: LIFELONG LEARNING AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

### Key point

- **Periodic self-assessments and a patient safety module comprise this component**

Two components comprise this part—periodic self-assessment and the patient safety self-assessment module. Periodic self-assessment requirement consists of three 100-question modules completed in years 1 to 3, 4 to 6, and 7 to 10, respectively. The 100-question target may be accrued in smaller increments over each of these periods. The MOC table allows the diplomate to attest to each completed self-assessment exercise. Sponsors of these activities, including the

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Dr Stratman is the principal author of the patient safety module currently used in Maintenance of Certification, participates in program development for the Skin Disease Education Foundation Maintenance of Certification self-assessment program, and

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is a Director of the American Board of Dermatology. Dr Horn is the Executive Director of the American Board of Dermatology (a salaried position) and an officer with patent holdings in Type IV Technologies (Little Rock, AR), a company centered on immunotherapy for warts.

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Your MOC table is up to date as of 2010

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<b>INTRODUCTORY MOC INFORMATION</b> All diplomates whose certification expires in 2006 and beyond must enter MOC. Doing so places you in the category "Certified (or recertified), participating in MOC". If you hold a lifetime certificate, it cannot be revoked based upon your performance on a recertification examination that you have taken voluntarily or upon your decision not to pursue all elements of the MOC program. You will continue to be in the category "Certified". If you certified in the period 1991-2005, you will enter MOC only upon successful recertification, but not before, and you are not required to complete any elements of this program until your successful recertification. If you possess a time-limited certificate and if you do not pass the MOC examination by the end of the ten-year cycle, you lose certification, but you may immediately reapply to enter the MOC cycle. There will be a period of time in which you are not certified by the American Board of Dermatology (ABD), but we encourage reapplication. Upon successful completion of the MOC examination, you are deemed to be "Recertified" and will enter MOC.  <b>If you recertify early (i.e., in year 8 or 9 of the 10-year cycle), you will only begin MOC in the year after your current certificate expires. For example, if your certificate expires at the end of 2011 but you passed the examination in 2009, you will enter MOC in January 2012. The annual fee must be paid by December 31, 2011 and participation in MOC activities begin January 2012. If you have paid the annual fee already, we will credit you once you enter MOC.</b>  The table represents the roadmap of the MOC cycle. You can click on the boxes in the table in order to notify us of completion of the various elements of the program. <b>We accept self-reporting but we will audit a certain number of diplomates for the accuracy of the data.</b> As you move through the MOC cycle, the clicked boxes will show the dates of completion of the various elements and will give you an idea of what remains to accomplish and in what time frame.																																																																																																																					
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Fig 1. Maintenance of Certification table with several data points entered.

American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), state medical societies, specialty societies, and medical education companies, must be approved by the ABD to offer MOC credit. Qualifying activities are listed in the resource section for each enrolled diplomate. The modules are designed to accomplish 3 things: identify relevant gaps in the diplomate's knowledge, provide information to help close the individual's knowledge gap, and to offer comparison data to other diplomates. No minimum score is required to receive credit for this type of self-assessment activity, because the purpose is to identify relevant areas that physicians need to improve rather than showing knowledge mastery.

Completion of the patient safety module is required within 2 years of entering MOC. The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) has published extensive curriculum requirements for MOC patient safety modules, and must approve all submissions before MOC credit can be awarded. The AAD is approved for a dermatology-specific patient safety module now available. Unlike the other self-assessment modules, patient safety modules require passing scores to receive MOC credit.

### PART 3: COGNITIVE EXPERTISE

#### Key point

- **The knowledge-based examination may be taken at any time from years 3 to 10 in the Maintenance of Certification cycle**

Cognitive expertise is shown through a knowledge-based examination. Passing the examination was the major event for entry into MOC and the capstone of the 10-year cycle. The Board allows entry into MOC without taking an examination for lifetime certificate holders, diplomates who may wish or need to enter early in order to pursue enhanced Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services reimbursement, or because of various state or institutional requirements. Once enrolled in MOC, the examination may be taken at any point during years 3 to 10 of the cycle. If taken early, no more than 12 years may elapse before the next examination is taken. For example, if a diplomate in her fourth year of the MOC cycle takes and passes the MOC examination in 2013, successful retaking of the examination must occur no later than the end of 2025. Diplomates with time-limited certificates who recertified before 2006 but could not yet enter MOC have the option of taking the examination in the 3 years

preceding the 10-year deadline but will not enter MOC until the year after their certificate expires. For example, a diplomate who certified or recertified in 2004 may take the examination in 2012, 2013, or 2014. Despite passing the examination in 2013, this individual would only enter MOC in 2015. The certificate cycle does not change based upon timing of the examination. Individuals actively participating in MOC will no longer pay an examination fee to satisfy the general dermatology certificate beginning in 2016.

Everyone must take and pass a general dermatology module consisting of 100 clinical images followed by a question asking for the most likely diagnosis among 5 listed choices. A list of diagnoses (eg, lichen planus, porphyria cutanea tarda) and diagnostic categories (eg, cutaneous signs of endocrine disorders) from which the images will be chosen is posted on the ABD website at least 6 months in advance and provided to dermatology organizations who prepare focused board preparation activities. In addition, passing a second emphasis area examination module is also required. Choices include medical dermatology, dermatopathology, surgical dermatology, and pediatric dermatology. Presently, these modules consist of 50 items taken from a published list of 75 to 100 questions also posted on the ABD web site and provided to these organizations. These items are a mix of images and written questions all in the “one-best-answer” format.

For doubly certified individuals (eg, dermatology and dermatopathology), the addition of a second 50-question subspecialty module is offered during the same administration. Passing the general dermatology, emphasis area, and subspecialty modules covers the general dermatology certificate and the subspecialty certificate.

Examinations are currently given at PearsonVue centers across the country during a 15-day window each spring.

## **PART 4: EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE IN PRACTICE**

### **Key point**

- **Over 10 years, diplomates must complete 2 practice performance exercises, 2 patient communication surveys, and 2 peer communication surveys**

Three components comprise part 4: practice performance assessments, patient communication surveys, and peer communication surveys. Two practice performance assessments must be completed during each 10-year cycle (1 in years 1-5; another in years 6-10). Meant as an opportunity to

reflect on what might be improved in the care delivered, the structure simulates the “plan-do-study-act” model of quality improvement. This includes selecting the measure to improve, measurement of the baseline performance with this measure before making any interventions, crafting and implementing a plan to improve the measure, allowing time to pass with the interventions in place, re-measuring the interval performance, and reflecting on the impact of the project. This type of activity is different than most types of educational experiences of the practicing dermatologist. Practice assessments require the dermatologist to analyze data relevant to his or her own practice. This might include, for example, determining the number of melanoma patients who did not have a documented full body skin examination performed at their last follow-up or the percentage of patients taking chronic prednisone who are not taking bone protective measures.

Several resources to complete these exercises are offered by the AAD.<sup>1</sup> The ABD approves practice performance assessment tools and processes before MOC credit can be obtained. In addition, the ABD accepts successful completion of practice performance assessments offered by other ABMS member boards.

Surveys of patients and peers must also be completed twice per 10-year cycle, once in years 1 to 5 and again in years 6 to 10. The focus of these surveys must be on the patient experience of care, with both emphasizing physician communication skills. Forty-five patient responses and 12 peer responses are required for successful completion. Peers may include coworkers, including physicians, allied providers, and nursing staff. These individuals must be sufficiently knowledgeable of your current practice to assess your communication competence. Applications for survey instruments must be approved by the ABMS before being offered as “MOC-qualifying.”

The resource page on the ABD web site lists approved surveys, including ABD-sponsored patient and peer web-based surveys offered at no cost to diplomates. E-mail addresses for a minimum of 90 patients are necessary for the patient survey. Most large institutions use patient satisfaction surveys from third-party vendors that adequately assess physician communication skills, and some have been vetted by the ABD.

## **REFERENCE**

1. American Academy of Dermatology web site. Performance improvement CME (PI CME). Available at: <http://www.aad.org/education-and-quality-care/aad-professional-education/performance-improvement-cme-picme>. Accessed January 23, 2013.