

BOARD NEWS

The MC-FP Process Approaches Its Second Year

The ABFP's Maintenance of Certification for Family Physicians (MC-FP) process is now welcoming its second group of Diplomates, who certify/recertify in 2004. These people will begin their MC-FP cycle in January 2005. Our first group of Diplomates, who certified/recertified in 2003 and began their MC-FP cycle in January 2004, are now 6 months into their first year. Throughout these first 6 months, the Board has responded to the comments from Diplomates with positive action, which has contributed to making the MC-FP process more beneficial and easier to use.

This article is composed of three components. The first addresses Diplomates who are certifying or recertifying in 2004. It provides direction to the comprehensive Help resources put in place to help them. The second component addresses the Diplomates who certified or recertified in 2003. Many of these Diplomates have used the Help resources, completed their Self-Assessment Module (SAM), and provided valuable questions and feedback that we address below. The third component answers the most frequently asked question that we receive: "When do I enter the MC-FP?"

It is important to note that the MC-FP process continues to evolve. Its success is dependent upon the communication we have with our Diplomates. We encourage and invite your input.

Diplomates Who Certify/Recertify in 2004

By the time you receive this issue of the *Journal of the American Board of Family Practice*, the second wave of Diplomates will have completed their certification/recertification examination. If you are one of these people and have successfully completed the examination, you will enter your cycle of the MC-FP process on January 1, 2005. The 7-year MC-FP cycle is similar to the recertification cycle that the American Board of Family Practice (ABFP) has had in place for more than 30 years. Along with the 23 other medical specialty boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the ABFP has broadened its requirement for self-assessment and lifelong learning. The MC-FP has some unique components that require your attention every year.

Unlike the former recertification process, we can now assess the Diplomate's knowledge beyond "just knowing" to "applying and doing" by using today's technology. We have developed this program so that you can participate electronically at your convenience. Most of the components of the MC-FP process can be completed in the comfort of your home or office at a time of your choosing. We will be communicating with you electronically on a regular basis, so it is important that we always have your current and valid e-mail address. If for any reason you change your e-mail address, notify us of the change online at <http://www.abfp.org>. If you need assistance, call our Help Desk at 877-223-7437.

Beginning on January 1, 2005, our web site (<http://www.abfp.org>) will be your entry portal to participate in the MC-FP process. This website is divided into two sections. The first contains general information that is available to all. The second section is accessible only by Diplomates using an ID and a password. To assist you in understanding the MC-FP process and its components, the ABFP encourages you to use the Help resources that are in place. The Help resources component is designed to help conserve time and maximize effort. Some of these Help resources are:

Online Tutorials and Help Desk

The following valuable interactive tools have been extremely helpful to Diplomates. Go to the <http://www.abfp.org> home page and select the "Tutorial" tab:

- 10-minute tutorial on use of the website
- 10-minute tutorial on completing the Self-Assessment Module (SAM)
- 10-minute tutorial on completing the interactive patient simulation (CBAS)

A Help Desk is open 12 hours daily and can be reached by calling 1-877-223-7437. A live operator will assist you with questions regarding computer access, ID and password information, navigation, etc.

General Information and Frequently Asked Questions

This area gives an excellent overall description of the MC-FP process. It also answers a number of questions that the Board has received. A downloadable MC-FP instruction booklet may be accessed at: <http://www.abfp.org/MOC/Instruction-ManualMC-FP.pdf>.

MC-FP and Diplomate Portfolio (Login, User ID, and Password Required)

If you have not received your login information, please contact the Help Desk at <http://www.abfp.org/login.aspx> or 1-877-233-7437. This password-protected area allows you to access your unique Diplomate Portfolio. Your portfolio will contain your personal and professional history and will track your progress in completing components of the MC-FP.

Diplomates Who Certified/Recertified in 2003 and Are in the First Year of the MC-FP Cycle

The new MC-FP has now been in place for 7 months. During this time, hundreds of Diplomates have logged on to <http://www.abfp.org>, reviewed the tutorials, and completed either the Diabetes or Hypertension Self-Assessment Modules (SAMs). We have asked for comments from these Diplomates via e-mail and personally at multichapter and state chapter meetings. We regard this communication as a critical element in the evolution of MC-FP process. Some of the questions we have received are answered below.

Q *Is CME credit available for successful completion of the Self-Assessment Modules (SAMs)?*

A The AAFP has recently awarded up to 15 hours of prescribed CME credit for successful completion of each of our first two SAMs (Hypertension and Diabetes).

Q *How many times can I take the SAM? (Diabetes or Hypertension)*

A Diplomates may take each SAM as many times as needed. On the third unsuccessful attempt to answer questions, an educational critique (basis for question) is shown. Please note that there is not a separate fee for each attempt. During the MC-FP

cycle, each Diplomate will be responsible for taking one SAM per year for a total of 6.

Q *What are the different payments options for the MC-FP cycle?*

A There are three payment options; option 1, pre-pay/all-inclusive, includes exam fee; option 2, 7-year annual payment/all-inclusive, includes exam fee; option 3, pay as you go; currently \$50 per SAM, \$50 for Performance in Practice Module (PPM) and applicable exam fee during the year in which you take the exam. Please see our website at <http://www.abfp.org> or call the Help Desk at 1-877-223-7437 for further information.

Q *I do not have broadband Internet access; will I be able to access the SAMs by dial-up?*

A Our dial-up access has performed well; in head-to-head comparisons, our web pages load more quickly than CNN.com and other major websites. We continue to monitor this area closely.

Q *What are the specifics of data transfer between the AAFP/ABFP? What will be automatic? What are the Diplomates' responsibilities?*

A Significant electronic data sharing already exists between the AAFP and ABFP. Both organizations understand the value of this, and an agreement to expand this data sharing is currently being finalized. As is currently the case, each Diplomate will be responsible for informing the AAFP with regard to reporting CME credit.

Q *What is the process that will be used to transfer file data to the ABFP for the chart review requirements, and how will this comply with HIPAA regulations?*

A The ABFP is very sensitive to HIPAA regulations. Therefore, only aggregate and de-identified data will be stored by the ABFP. Furthermore, an "electronic key" will be provided to individual Diplomates when they begin Part IV of MC-FP. The Diplomate's electronic key will allow only them to open and enter their Performance in Practice Modules (PPMs). The ABFP will have no access to the data submitted by the individual physicians, thereby eliminating any risk of discoverability.

Q *What does the ABFP do with the feedback it receives from its Diplomates?*

A First, it is critical in the evolution of the MC-FP process to receive comments and feedback from the Diplomates. The ABFP uses this feedback to continually improve the components of the MC-FP. For example, as a result of the excellent feedback so far, 6 major structural changes have been made to the SAMs.

Q *Our Annual State Chapter meeting is in the fall. What steps do we follow to invite someone from the ABFP to address our members?*

A The ABFP has a number of members of the Board of Directors, executive staff, and volunteers who look forward to the opportunity to participate in state chapter meetings. We have participated in more than 10 meetings so far and have 7 scheduled for the future. If you feel it would be helpful to have someone participate at your state chapter meeting, call 1-888-995-5700, ext. 281.

Q *What are others saying about the MC-FP?*

A “The American Board of Family Practice (ABFP) is to be commended for its move from recertification to Maintenance of Certification as a measure of the competence of individual physicians. In addition to verification of physician credentials, the new Maintenance of Certification process requires self-assessment using validated, Web-based instruments and patient simulation; a computer-based version of the traditional cognitive examination; and evidence of continuous practice

improvement. Physicians will be expected to demonstrate improved patient care through implementation of evidence-based guidelines, meeting benchmarks, measuring quality, and improving patient outcomes. This process will be an essential part of the lifelong assessment of family physicians.” —Future of Family Medicine Project Leadership Committee. The future of family medicine: a collaborative project of the family medicine community. *Ann Fam Med* 2004;2(Suppl 1):S65–74

Q *When do I enter the MC-FP?*

A This is the most commonly asked question that the Board hears. Each Diplomate’s participation in the MC-FP will follow the same timeframe as the recertification schedule that has been in existence for 30 years (Table 1).

We encourage all Diplomates to use the Help resources available at <http://www.abfp.org> and/or call the Help Desk at 1-877-223-7437. These tools are designed to help you successfully complete the MC-FP process.

Table 1. Recertification Cycle

Year Certification/ Recertification Examination Taken	Date of Entry into MC-FP Cycle (Process)
2003	January 2004
2004	January 2005
2005	January 2006
2006	January 2007
2007	January 2008
2008	January 2009
2009	January 2010