

BOARD NEWS

Maintenance of Certification Program Enhancements

In addition to its regular 7-year recertification process, in 2004 the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) began the implementation of its Maintenance of Certification for Family Physicians (MC-FP). The rollout of MC-FP was designed to gradually transition all Diplomates into this new program by 2010 by entering all physicians who certify or recertify into this new program in the year after they successfully pass the examination. The first group that entered MC-FP in 2004 was composed of those physicians who certified or recertified in 2003; the last group to come into the program in 2010 will be those who certify or recertify in 2009.

The ABFM has recently modified the program to include more options and greater flexibility for Diplomates. The most important new enhancement is the opportunity for Diplomates to extend their certification period from 7 to 10 years by regularly completing MC-FP requirements in a timely fashion.

About the Maintenance of Certification Program

MC-FP is a mechanism that provides the ABFM with the means of continuously assessing Diplomates. Every specialty board that belongs to the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) has agreed to a generic structure with which each of its individual programs must comply. This structure consists of 4 elements designed to assess 4 important physician characteristics: professionalism (Part I), self-assessment and lifelong learning (Part II), cognitive expertise (Part III), and performance in practice (Part IV). Although these elements are similar to and consistent with the ABFM's long-standing, existing recertification program, MC-FP stresses the importance of ongoing participation in activities that evaluate each of these between recertification examinations—a requirement that ABFM believes encourages clinical excellence and benefits both physicians and their patients.

Extending a Certificate from 7 to 10 Years

As mentioned, one of the important new enhancements is the option to extend a recently earned 7-year certificate by 3 years, effectively creating a 10-year certification period. Under the original MC-FP program that began in 2004, each ABFM-certified Diplomate was required to maintain a current and valid license and complete 6 self-assessment modules (SAMs) and one performance in practice module (PPM) [or a METRIC module created by the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP)] before sitting for the recertification examination in the 6th or 7th year. A new option will allow Diplomates to complete two Part II modules (currently the SAMs) and one Part IV module (currently a PPM or METRIC) at their own pace in three separate 3-year windows (we call these Stages).

Completing these requirements in a timely manner within the first two 3-year stages will allow physicians to extend the life of their certificate from 7 to 10 years. Those Diplomates who are not able to complete these requirements will fall back to the original 7-year cycle. It is important to note that the first two groups to enter MC-FP in 2004 and 2005 (those who certified or recertified in 2003 and 2004, respectively) will be allowed to complete either three Part II modules or two Part II modules and one Part IV module to meet the requirements for the first 3-year stage only.

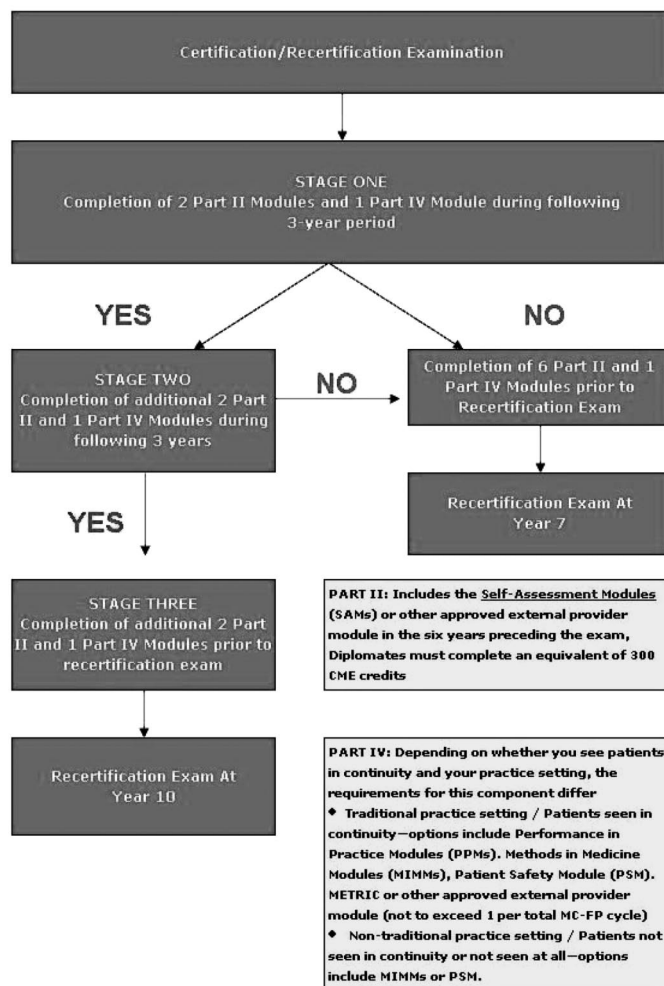
This major improvement in MC-FP will help Diplomates keep up with rapid advances in medicine, while duly recognizing the achievement of full and timely participation in MC-FP. Please see the Figure 1 to visualize how this process will operate.

Additional Program Enhancements

New options have been created for Part IV. In addition to the currently available PPMs and the AAFP's METRIC modules (one of which may be used to satisfy a Part IV requirement), two new types of modules have been created. Methods in Medicine Modules (MIMMs) will introduce Dip-

How the Ten Year Option Works

The schematic below illustrates how the new option works.



NOTE: You may elect to stay in the 7-year cycle or enter the 10-year. If you decide to enter the 10 year cycle, but do not complete a 3-Year block, you will automatically be put back into the 7-year cycle.

Figure 1. How the 10-year option works.

lomates to important concepts that will help them in their day-to-day practice of medicine. The first MIMM, which will focus on information management, will be available in 2007 with more to follow. A Patient Safety Module (PSM), currently being produced by ABMS for use by all specialty boards, will come on-line no later than 2008. These new modules will create a rich menu from which Diplomates can select options to meet their Part IV requirements. The MIMMs and the PSM have been designed specifically to help Diplomates who do not practice or see patients in continuity meet their requirements. (Please note: those Diplomates in these categories who entered MC-FP in 2004 or 2005 can complete a SAM to meet their Part IV

requirement for Stage One if they wish to choose the new 10-year cycle.)

Payment Options

We will continue to offer similar payment options under the new plan. The new payment plan, to be implemented in January 2007, will result in a lower annualized cost over the 10-year MC-FP cycle for those Diplomates choosing either the full prepayment option or the annual payment option. Both of these payment options guarantee the total cost of MC-FP, including the examination.

For more details on existing and future payment options, as well as information for those Diplo-

mates who certified or recertified in 2003, 2004, or 2005, please visit our website.

Program Participation

All Diplomates are eligible to choose the 10-year cycle, including those who are currently eligible for MC-FP but who have not started the process yet. For those Diplomates who were certified or recertified in 2003 or 2004, a limited amount of time exists to complete the requirement for Stage One. These Diplomates are encouraged to enroll in MC-FP and begin completion of their requirements immediately. The *MC-FP Handbook*, which

can be accessed on our website, provides information on how to begin the process, payment options, and requirements for each of the four parts of MC-FP. Diplomates can track their progress in MC-FP through a unique on-line portfolio, which contains personal and professional history and assists Diplomates in monitoring their completion of the program requirements.

To Obtain More Information

- Visit our Web site (<http://www.theabfm.org>).
- Contact us directly for one-on-one assistance by calling our Help Desk at 1-877-223-7437.