

Correspondence

Re: American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) Launches New Exam Prep iPhone Application

To the Editor: Using the iPhone approach to provide quizzes along with explanations and references¹ is an excellent idea. With some modifications, it could replace the recertification exams.

Indeed, by eliminating the expense and the loss of time that mark the current recert process, the iPhone makes keeping current more in tune with physicians' busy lives. Physicians taking the quizzes could focus on those questions that are pertinent to their practices. They would be spared the anxiety and loss of time wasted on assimilating information that they don't need. And, if the punitive factor were eliminated, the iPhone application would be almost be the perfect recertification tool.

The point is that after physicians pass their initial certification exams, subsequent recertifications should focus on their actual needs. They should never feel the need to take expensive board recertification courses or engorge themselves with information they don't use—just to pass a test and avoid a “failing” grade and lose their certification status.

Giving physicians quizzes or clinical situations and asking useful questions and supplying answers should be the modus operandi of all future recertification exams.

The Connecticut and Ohio Academies of Family Physicians in 1968 developed a home study course called the

“Core Content Review of Family Medicine.” Subscribers are supplied periodically with questions and answer booklets that give clear explanations. They are excellent educational tools because they teach without being punitive.

Although there are some questions that doctors will answer incorrectly because they may no longer do pediatrics or ob-gyn, for example, there is no punitive response. The booklets serve as practical practice manuals that the doctors can refer back to.

Most important, there is no need to take expensive board review exams, no anxiety, and no engorgement with little-used information—and no threat to losing one's hard-earned primary certification.

The iPhone application has great promise to succeed where the current method fails.

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References

1. Mason M. American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) launches new exam prep iPhone application. *J Am Board Fam Med* 2011;24:220.

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The above letter was referred to the author of the article in question, who offers the following reply.