

BOARD NEWS

American Board of Family Medicine Rolls Out Family Medicine Certification Longitudinal Assessment (FMCLA) as 2019 Pilot

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In response to requests from board-certified family physicians, American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) has announced a new pilot program for 2019 to assess the value and feasibility of a longitudinal assessment option to the 10-year 1-day examination. Grounded in advances in education and assessment, and combined with today's technology, the Family Medicine Certification Longitudinal Assessment (FMCLA) is developed to satisfactorily assess current knowledge competency while promoting learning and retention of information that can help improve clinical decision making.

All family physicians who are in their 10th year of their certification cycle in 2019 will be eligible for the pilot. Those physicians may opt to either participate in the FMCLA pilot or register for the 10-year examination, whichever they prefer. Based on the popular Continuous Knowledge Self-Assessment platform, the FMCLA will deliver 25 questions online each quarter that can be answered from anywhere, anytime, with the avoidance of a test center. Questions can be answered one at a time, or all in one sitting, using a desktop, laptop, or tablet. The format of the questions will be similar to the current examination, with a single best answer. Participants will be able to use written resources, as needed, much like point-of-care information is accessed in practice, although consulting with colleagues will not be permitted. Examinees will find out immediately if their question response is correct, along with rationale for the right and wrong options. References will also be provided related to the topic. Diplomate identification and test item security measures are built into the delivery platform.

To ensure equivalency to the current examination, participants will continue the quarterly questions until 300 questions have been answered over a 4-year period. This allows flexibility to skip questions, or even quarters, as the needs of practice and life dictate. For those who participate in the pilot, meaningful participation will be required in the first year, defined as answering 80% or more of the total questions each quarter and responding to pilot surveys. After successfully completing 300 items and meeting the minimum passing standard (using standard setting techniques similar to the 10-year examination to determine pass/fail), participants will have completed their cognitive expertise activity for Family Medicine Certification.

A major advantage of FMCLA is that it supports greater retention of knowledge and learning over time. No time will be required out of practice for travel, preparatory courses, or using testing centers. There will be no additional cost to participate in longitudinal assessment beyond the fees that Diplomates pay today.

All along the way, ABFM is committed to elicit and receive regular input from participants about how to make the process as useful and effective as possible. Going forward, if the pilot program is successful, all Diplomates will have the flexibility to choose longitudinal assessment over the 1-day examination. For those who prefer the 10-year examination and would rather not participate in the longitudinal assessment pathway, that will continue to be an option.

Eligible Diplomates were notified to sign up for the pilot beginning in early December 2018. The last day to begin a new application for FMCLA is March 1, 2019. To view a tutorial and get additional information, please visit the ABFM Web site: www.theabfm.org.

Conflict of interest: The author is an employee of the ABFM.