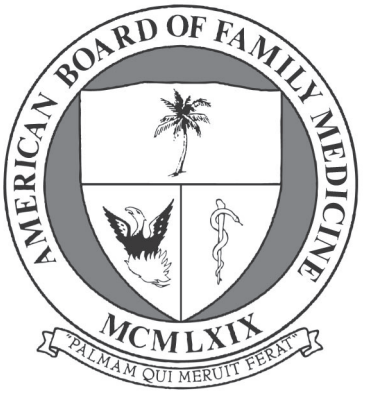
ABFM Emblem



The Emblem of the American Board of Family Medicine embodies the story of the Specialty of Family Medicine.

The upper half of the Emblem pictures a palm tree. The lower half is divided into two parts: on the left-hand side is a representation of the mythological bird, the Phoenix, rising out of its nest of fire; on the right-hand side of the lower half is the standard of medicine, the Staff of Aesculapius.

The palm tree is the Phoenix Dactylifera, the Latin name for the date palm, so called because of the ancient idea that if this tree is burned down or if it falls through old age, it will rejuvenate itself and spring up fairer than ever. This symbolizes our specialty arising directly from its general practice heritage.

The Phoenix, the fabulous Arabian mythological bird, lives a certain number of years, at the close of which it makes a nest of spices, sings a melodious dirge, flaps its wings to set fire to the pile and burns itself to ashes and comes forth with new life. This, of course, symbolizes our periodic recertification.

Immediately below the Emblem are the Latin words, “Palmam Qui Meruit Ferat”--“Let him bear the palm who has earned it”. This refers to the Roman custom to give the victorious gladiator a branch of the palm tree, the palm leaf being a sign of attainment of victory--symbolizing for us the attainment of Diplomate status by examination.

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