

Board News

Paul R. Young, M.D.

The American Board of Family Practice is pleased to announce the employment of Dr. Robert Avant as Deputy Executive Director. Dr. Avant has been active in family practice for many years. His most recent appointment has been as Chairman of the Department of Family Practice at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Dr. Avant was the first chairman of Family Practice at Mayo Clinic, and he held that position until his planned resignation in 1990.

Dr. Avant was very successful in achieving a high degree of respect for his department in a nontraditional academic environment. During the initial phase of his employment by the Board, he will continue to provide services to the Mayo Clinic. When that project is completed, he will be full-time with the Board. Dr. Avant's special interests lie in graduate education and international



Robert Avant, M.D.

family practice, as well as specialty certification. Robert is married and has three sons.

Unsanctioned Certifying Boards

At the time of this writing, several Diplomates have received communication from the American Board of Sports Medicine, Inc., in Atlanta, Georgia. Evidently, this organization is planning to develop and implement an examination that presumably would lead to a certificate of some kind. The ABFP has no knowledge of this organization or of its leadership. There is apparently a fairly ambitious plan for test development.

This kind of activity is not new in American medicine. There are more than 100 self-designated certifying bodies for physicians in the USA. There are only 23 certifying boards that have been evaluated by the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) and subsequently have been made member boards of the ABMS. The American Board of Family Practice is a member board of the ABMS, having achieved that status by a rigorous evaluation by both the AMA and the ABMS. The American Board of Sports Medicine, Inc., has not undergone this degree of scrutiny. The qualifications of the people and the processes of certification have not been determined by an external evaluation.

We would advise that you consider carefully the decision to invest in the certifying process. Base your decision on reasonable criteria and ask: (1) Who is establishing the standard? (2) Is the examination reliable and valid? (3) Is the certificate acceptable generally as a measure of specialty credentials?