Board News

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Validation of Examinations

For the past several months, the Board has been conducting a series of studies that are intended to serve as a basis for validation of the certification and recertification examinations. In simple terms, validation is a means of determining whether the test given properly covers the content of the specialty. Job analysis and task analysis are important components of validation. Some of you have been or will be asked to participate in various surveys and other activities directed toward the validation process. Your cooperation is necessary and deeply appreciated. It is anticipated that the study will be completed by early fall 1992. The information will be used to modify the content of the examinations if the data demonstrate a need for change.

1991 Certification-Recertification Examinations

The Board collects data from certification-recertification candidates and uses the information to maintain a set of "vital signs" about the Diplomates of the Board. On 1 January 1992, there were 38,880 current Diplomates. Of these, 30,056 (77.3 percent) are residency-trained. California is the state with the largest number of Diplomates — 4331 (11.1 percent). The postal region with the largest number is 981XX in Seattle, Washington.

The medical school that has produced the largest number of current Diplomates is the University of Minnesota with 1434 (3.7 percent). The residency program of the University of Minnesota has produced the largest number of current Diplomates — 645 (1.7 percent). The nearest competitor is John Peter Smith Hospital Center in Fort Worth, Texas, with 277 (0.7 percent).

The University of Minnesota has long been the largest residency program in the country, as well as the one with the most training sites.

To the surprise of no one, the number of women Diplomates is increasing. There are now 7095 (18.2 percent), up from 17.1 percent last year.

The age distribution of the Diplomates continues to shift. Currently, the mean age is 43 years, but the median age is 40 years and the mode is 38 years. This suggests that the Diplomate population continues to get younger. However, there are 3 Diplomates 90 years or older and 22 Diplomates who are past 80 years of age.

Some observations of trends about our Diplomate population can be achieved by comparing the data of 1991 recertified Diplomates with the cumulative data of the Diplomate pool during the past 7 years. There were 22,572 physicians recertified from 1985 through 1991; of these, 4417 recertified in 1991. During the last 7 years, 31.2 percent of the physicians were in solo practice while 28.9 percent of the 1991 group were in solo practice. Conversely, 29.5 percent of the larger group were in group practice while 32.7 percent of the 1991 group were in group practice. This suggests a slight change in distribution, although it is not precise because some physicians will have been counted twice and the solo physicians may have been more likely to be counted only once. No significant trend is seen in community size.

Data from the recertification examinations reveal that there have been 41,940 physicians recertified. Of these, 4417 were recertified in 1991. There were 16,138 who have been recertified once; of these, there were 2107 in 1991; 10,013 have been recertified twice, with 1825 in 1991; and 1925 have been recertified three times, 485 in 1991.

Except for age, sex, and residency training, the data tend to suggest a remarkably stable specialty. For all Diplomates recertified since 1984, there were 28.5 percent doing obstetrics in 1991, while in 1990, the figure was 30.2 percent. In 1991 admitting privileges were reported at 89.5 percent, while it was 90.2 percent in 1990.

It is our hope that this information is interesting to you. I believe that, in general, in spite of troubled times and turmoil, as a specialty we are evolving slowly. I see no evidence of precipitous changes.

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