



American Board
of Medical Specialties

Higher standards. Better care.®

Key Messages and FAQs National Board of Physicians and Surgeons

Key Messages

- The value of board certification by an ABMS Member Board should not be understated for the following reasons:
 - Patients deserve access to highly skilled specialty care
 - Patients trust board certification because it signifies that a physician has demonstrated the knowledge, judgment and skills to provide safe and high-quality specialty care and delivers such care consistent with the professional norms expected of a board certified physician
 - Patients expect their physicians to be up to date with the most recent medical advances in their specialties
 - Patients expect certified diplomates to demonstrate their proficiency through an ongoing rigorous board certification process
- The National Board of Physicians and Surgeons (NBPAS) was created to provide an alternative certificate for physicians that does not require an ongoing assessment of their knowledge, judgment, skills and professionalism and instead only requires 50 hours of continuing medical education every two years.
- NBPAS has described itself as an “alternate pathway to maintaining certification,” yet it has no authority to provide such a pathway. **Physicians who choose not to recertify through an ABMS Member Board will not retain their ABMS certification when their certificates expire.**
- An NBPAS certificate is NOT equivalent to ABMS board certification. NBPAS does not:
 - Define specialty-specific standards for knowledge, judgment and skills necessary to practice safely and competently in a specialty.
 - Independently validate through assessment that physicians have the knowledge, judgment and skills to provide safe and effective specialty care.
 - Have a defined process for monitoring the professionalism of its members, the lack of which places patients at risk.
 - Expect its certificate holders to demonstrate that they are improving care in medical practice.
 - Conduct research to provide the evidence-based data supporting the value of its program and informing its continued quality improvement.

- NBPAS restores 1970s board certification practices eliminating continuing certification, which does not reflect the current expectation or responsibility of the profession for meaningful self-regulation and places the integrity and strength of the credential at risk. There is substantial evidence that a program of self-directed CME alone, such as NBPAS' certificate program, is not sufficient to maintain clinical knowledge, judgement and skills.
- Additionally, ABMS Member Boards have identified physicians whose certificates were revoked for professionalism breaches who are now certified by NBPAS. The reasons for these revocations range from sexual boundary violations to serious irregularities in controlled substances prescribing and other professionalism issues. This type of behavior places patients and organizations who rely on NBPAS certification as equivalent at risk from physicians who may repeat similar behaviors.
- ABMS and its Member Boards recently completed a comprehensive, publicly transparent and collaborative process to enhance their continuing certification programs so that they:
 - Are more relevant to practice
 - Offer an alternative to high stakes testing with convenient on-line assessments that support learning and improvement
 - Integrate learning, assessment, and improvement that verifies that certified physicians have demonstrated that they have up-to-date knowledge and skills and are engaged in improving care.
 - Collaborate with specialty societies and other educational partners to link assessment with practice-relevant learning opportunities
 - Continue to provide the public with a reliable and dependable credential while also engaging participating physicians in providing ongoing feedback to facilitate ongoing improvement of the continuing certification process.

FAQs

- **Did the Joint Commission and the National Committee of Quality Assurance (NCQA) name NBPAS as a legitimate certifying body?**

The Joint Commission and NCQA have listed NBPAS as an example of resources that can be used by hospital or health plan credentialing services to validate a candidate physician's educational attainment. Neither organization has declared the NBPAS certificate as equivalent to ABMS Member Board certification.

- **Can I retain my ABMS Member Board certification if I recertify via NBPAS?**

No, NBPAS "recertification" is not a substitute for the continuing certification requirements of any of the ABMS Member Boards. Diplomates who certify with NBPAS but do not participate in their ABMS Member Board continuing certification programs are at risk of losing their ABMS Member Board certification when it expires.

- **NBPAS was created as an alternative to ABMS Maintenance of Certification. Aren't your programs still costly, irrelevant and burdensome?**

No. The new ABMS Standards for Continuing Certification program redesign will lead to reduced costs to diplomates, increase the relevance of their assessments to physicians' practice, eliminate the need for high stakes testing events, and provide feedback to participating physicians to guide their learning.

The Standards were established after a comprehensive, transparent and collaborative process involving practicing physicians and their professional organizations as well as hospitals, health systems, health plans, and patients. The Standards set a framework for continuing certification that both supports learning and provides the public with a dependable credential that validates physician specialty expertise.