



American Board  
of Internal Medicine®

AUGUST 2009

**ABIM MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION  
2009 PROGRAM AND POLICY GUIDE**

This booklet provides information about the ABIM Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program, including requirements, policies and enrollment procedures. Keep it as a handy reference and contact ABIM at 1-800-441-ABIM or visit [www.abim.org/moc](http://www.abim.org/moc) if you have questions.

## THE ABIM MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION (MOC) PROGRAM

Internists and subspecialists certified in 1990\* or later renew their certification through ABIM's MOC program. MOC promotes the enhancement of the clinical judgment and skills essential for high quality patient care through intensive study, self assessment and evaluation.

*\* 1987 for Critical Care Medicine and 1988 for Geriatric Medicine*

### What are the MOC Components?

There are three components of ABIM's MOC program that reflect guidelines of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the federation of all recognized certifying boards in the United States.

- ✓ Be **licensed** and in good standing and fulfill any applicable procedural requirements
- ✓ Earn 100 points\* of **self-evaluation** in two categories:
  - 20 points of medical knowledge
  - 20 points of practice performance
  - 60 points from either medical knowledge, practice performance or both
- ✓ Pass the secure **examination**

Note that the self-evaluation requirement and secure exam can be completed *in any order* during the 10-year time frame. (You do not need to earn all 100 points of self-evaluation before you take the exam). Beginning in the sixth year of your current certification you can take the secure exam. Your new certification will begin when your current one expires.

*\*There are no additional self-evaluation requirements for renewing multiple certifications, providing 100 points remain valid when the certificates expire. Once passed, self-evaluation points are valid for 10 years.*

### Do I Have to Maintain My Internal Medicine Certificate to Maintain Certification in Another Subspecialty?

In general, you do not need to maintain certification in internal medicine or a particular subspecialty in order to maintain certification in another subspecialty; however, a few exceptions apply:

TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR A RENEWAL OF A CERTIFICATE IN:	YOU MUST:
Adolescent Medicine, Hospice and Palliative Medicine, Sleep Medicine, or Sports Medicine	Maintain a valid underlying certificate in either Internal Medicine or an ABIM subspecialty
Advanced Heart Failure and Transplant Cardiology, Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiology or Interventional Cardiology	Maintain a valid underlying certificate in Cardiovascular Disease
Transplant Hepatology	Maintain a valid underlying certificate in Gastroenterology

## How Do I Enroll in the Maintenance of Certification program?

- Go to the Physician Login section, located in the upper right-hand corner of ABIM's website, [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org).
- Enter your ABIM number and your password. If you forget your login information, there are prompts on the login page to help you obtain them. If you have never logged on to your home page before, the default password is your six-digit date of birth (MMDDYY).
- On your personal home page, under *My Maintenance of Certification Program*, click on *Enroll in Maintenance of Certification Program* and follow the instructions.
- You will be asked to complete a practice characteristics survey and update your contact information.
- Save the enrollment confirmation page you receive for your records. It provides information about the MOC program components, including how to register for the exam.

## What are the Fees?

- Enrollment includes a registration and credentialing fee, one secure examination, and unlimited access to self-evaluation modules for the duration of your certificate. Visit [www.abim.org/moc-cost](http://www.abim.org/moc-cost) for current fee information.

## Can I Request a Refund if I Decide Not to Participate?

- Once you have completed any MOC program module or examination, no refund will be processed.
- If you have not completed any self-evaluation modules and have not taken the examination, you may be eligible for a partial refund if you withdraw from the program. ABIM retains a fee to cover the cost of registration.

For additional information, please see the *Enroll & Understand Policies for Maintenance of Certification* page at [www.abim.org/moc](http://www.abim.org/moc).

## Can I receive CME Credit When I Participate in MOC?

Yes, you can receive CME Credit in two ways:

- Claim AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ for completion of ABIM self-evaluation modules.
- Claim AMA PRA Category 1 CME Credit™ directly from AMA upon your successful completion of the Maintenance of Certification program requirements.

See *Claim CME Credit* at [www.abim.org/moc](http://www.abim.org/moc) for details.

## MORE ABOUT THE COMPONENTS:

### VERIFICATION OF CREDENTIALS

You must possess a valid, unrestricted and unchallenged medical license in the jurisdiction where you practice. Candidates with licenses that are restricted, suspended, revoked or surrendered in any jurisdiction will be denied recertification. There also may be a procedural requirement for your subspecialty.

**Note:** Interventional cardiologists must submit a Form Attesting Interventional Cardiology Practice, verifying their performance as primary operator, co-operator or supervisor of 150 percutaneous coronary interventional (PCI) cases in the two years prior to expiration of their certificate. Additional information about this requirement can be found at [www.abim.org/specialty/icard.aspx](http://www.abim.org/specialty/icard.aspx).

Candidates with a history of substance abuse must submit documentation of at least one year of continuous sobriety from a reliable monitoring source to ABIM to renew certification. ABIM treats such information as confidential.

### THE SELF-EVALUATION REQUIREMENT

MOC provides an opportunity to conduct a self-assessment of your knowledge and practice performance. You complete the self-evaluation requirement by completing modules to earn a total of 100 points from two categories:

- **Self-Evaluation of Medical Knowledge** — open-book modules, consisting of multiple-choice, single-best-answer questions, testing clinical and practical knowledge in a particular field.
- **Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance** — modules that focus on improving your practice, including ABIM PIMs Practice Improvement Modules<sup>SM</sup>. You can also earn point credit in this category through ABIM's Approved Quality Improvement (AQI) pathway.

#### What's the Timeframe for Completing the Self-Evaluation Requirement?

You can complete your self-evaluation modules at whatever rate you choose over the 10-year period of your certificate. For this reason, you can begin to order and complete self-evaluation modules as soon as you enroll. The points you earn for completing each module are valid for 10 years. You also may complete your 100 points of self-evaluation *before or after* you take the secure examination. However, to prevent a lapse in certification, you *must* complete the 100 points by December 31 of the year in which your certificate expires. For further information about the self-evaluation requirement, go to [www.abim.org/moc](http://www.abim.org/moc).

#### Self-Evaluation of Medical Knowledge

Medical knowledge modules provide evidence of engagement in periodic self-assessment to guide continuing learning. Each module allows you to perform a diagnostic self-assessment of your strengths and weaknesses in important aspects of the knowledge base underlying each certification area.

**Note:** Medical knowledge modules for subspecialties are available to all diplomates, but are targeted to those who have earned certificates in those areas. Diplomates not certified or formally trained in the given subspecialty may find these modules more challenging than modules in their certification area, but ABIM encourages diplomates to select modules that fit their self-assessment goals.

## How Many Points Do I Earn for Completing Each Medical Knowledge Module?

Each medical knowledge module is worth 10 Maintenance of Certification points. They are available in a Web-based format, many with hyperlinks to educational material from professional societies. Each medical knowledge module contains 25 multiple-choice questions, all of which have been reviewed for clinical relevance by full-time practitioners certified in the area of the module. Most modules address content within a single certification area; however, a few may be broadly applicable to several disciplines within internal medicine.

## How Long Do I Have to Complete Medical Knowledge Modules?

Each ABIM medical knowledge module must be completed and submitted to ABIM within 90 days. You will receive a score report that confirms whether or not the module was completed successfully. If you did not achieve a passing score, the instant score report identifies questions answered incorrectly. You can correct and resubmit the module for rescoring once every 24 hours until you pass it. The status of the modules you have completed successfully will appear on your home page in the *Physician Login* section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org). (Successful completion of each module is determined by the use of a performance standard set by ABIM. If a module has not been completed successfully, you may retake the module as often as necessary, without an additional charge.)

## Where Can I Find a Listing of Medical Knowledge Modules?

A complete listing of medical knowledge modules for both internal medicine and its subspecialties can be found on the *Self-Evaluation of Medical Knowledge* page at [www.abim.org/moc](http://www.abim.org/moc).

## How Can I Order Medical Knowledge Modules?

After enrolling in MOC, you can order and work on ABIM medical knowledge modules by logging into your home page through the *Physician Login* at [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org). Under *My Maintenance of Certification Program*, select *Order Medical Knowledge Module*.

## Are There Other Ways to Earn Medical Knowledge Credit?

Yes. ABIM has designated several educational self-assessment products developed by professional medical societies or other member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) that can be used to earn MOC self-evaluation points. Review the list of medical knowledge modules found on the *Self-Evaluation of Medical Knowledge* page at [www.abim.org/moc](http://www.abim.org/moc) to view the list of these products by subspecialty.

Important reminders about these products:

- Contact the respective organization directly for more information and details about ordering and completing the designated products of societies and other American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) boards for MOC credit.
- Self-evaluation points toward Maintenance of Certification will vary from product to product.
- The providing organization may charge an additional fee for use of its product.
- The product fees charged by these organizations are *separate* from ABIM's Maintenance of Certification enrollment fee.

## Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance

Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance provides you with a way to apply quality measurement to your practice and then use the resulting data to improve care. Two of the most popular ways to complete Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance are: the ABIM PIMs Practice Improvement Modules<sup>SM</sup> and the ABIM-Approved Quality Improvement Pathway (AQI).

### What are PIMs?

ABIM PIMs Practice Improvement Modules are Web-based tools that enable you to conduct a confidential self-evaluation of medical care you provide. PIMs help you gain knowledge about your practice through data analysis, which you use to develop and implement a plan to target areas for improvement.

- PIMs are worth 20 or 40 Maintenance of Certification points each, depending on the PIM chosen. Visit [www.abim.org/choosepim](http://www.abim.org/choosepim) for details about each PIM, including point values.
- Interacting with the PIM online takes a few hours, and quality improvement projects generally take several months. You should therefore plan for about three months to complete a PIM and allow for ample time.
- Visit [www.abim.org/pimdemo](http://www.abim.org/pimdemo) to browse through most of the PIMs to see what is required to complete each one.

After enrolling in the Maintenance of Certification program, you can order and work on PIMs by logging into your home page through the *Physician Login* at [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org). Under *My Maintenance of Certification Program*, select *Order Practice Improvement Module*.

### What's the ABIM-Approved Quality Improvement Pathway?

You can also earn 20 points of Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance credit through ABIM's Approved Quality Improvement (AQI) pathway. If you serve as a leader or member of a team in an approved program, you may attest to your participation in this activity for practice performance credit.

Visit [www.abim.org/aqi](http://www.abim.org/aqi) for a complete list of AQI programs and products.

### Did You Know?

- If you receive sufficient clinical performance data from ABIM-approved sources or if you have recently completed or plan to complete a quality improvement (QI) project in your practice, you can order and complete the Self-Directed PIM to meet your Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance requirement.
- You can team up with one or more physicians in a practice to collectively engage in quality improvement activities by completing the Group PIM option to meet your Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance requirement.
- If you have no patients and no access to patient data, either directly or indirectly, you can order and complete the Essentials of Quality Improvement Module to meet your Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance requirement. Visit [www.abim.org/moc/mocsepp.aspx](http://www.abim.org/moc/mocsepp.aspx) for a complete list of options.

## THE SECURE EXAMINATION

Passing the ABIM secure examination is a requirement to maintain your certificate for another ten years. Examinations are computer-based and are administered at over 200 test centers nationwide and internationally. Please visit the [Take the Exam: Your Complete Guide](#) section at [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org) for more details.

The MOC examination is designed to evaluate the extent of your knowledge and clinical judgment in the areas in which you should demonstrate a high level of competence. Exam questions are developed by a team of specialists in practice and academic medicine. During the exam, you will be asked to demonstrate your mastery in your specialty and the diagnosis and treatment of both common and rare conditions that have important consequences for patients.

Maintenance of Certification examinations take approximately eight hours. The day is divided into three sessions, each containing up to 60 multiple-choice questions. The schedule includes registration, optional tutorial, instructions, the exam, optional breaks and an optional survey.

The exam consists of multiple-choice, single-best-answer questions only. This type of question consists of a brief statement, case history, graph or picture followed by a question and list of possible options. You must choose the one answer that is better than the others; note that other options may be partially correct. Familiarizing yourself with the question format in advance may help you work more effectively. An online tutorial is available in the [Take the Exam](#) section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org) – see page 9 for details.

The majority of questions (over 75 percent) are based on patient presentations. The setting of the encounters reflects current medical practice. Questions requiring simple recall of medical facts are in the minority; the majority of items require integration of information from several sources, prioritization of alternatives and/or utilization of clinical judgment in reaching a correct conclusion. Some questions require interpretation of pictorial material.

For details about each examination by specialty, please see the [Take the Exam](#) page at [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org).

### When is the Examination?

MOC examinations are offered in the Spring and Fall of each year. Specific information about internal medicine and the subspecialty exams, including key dates, exam blueprints, deadlines and related policy information, can be found in the [Take the Exam](#) section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org). Go to the [Details about each Exam by Specialty](#) page and look in the “Maintenance of Certification Exams” column for the exam(s) you plan to take.

### When Can I Register to Take the Examination?

- Beginning in the sixth year of your 10-year certificate, you may register for the examination during the registration periods.
- You may take the examination even if you have not completed your self-evaluation modules.

*\* Adolescent Medicine and Sports Medicine Maintenance of Certification Exams - Requirements and registration differ. See the [Schedule a Maintenance of Certification Exam](#) page in the [Take the Exam](#) section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org).*

Maintenance of Certification Exams*	Registration Period	Cancellation Deadline
Spring Administration	December 1 – February 15	April 15
Fall Administration	May 1 – August 1	October 1

## How Do I Register for the Examination?

- Visit the *Schedule a Maintenance of Certification Exam* page in the *Take the Exam* section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org) for complete details.
- Contact Pearson VUE Professional Centers during the registration periods indicated on page 7 at 1-800-601-3549 or online at [www.pearsonvue.com](http://www.pearsonvue.com) and provide your ABIM number.
- Register early - seat assignments are on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Be sure to get an order number from the Pearson VUE representative.
- IMPORTANT: If you *do not receive* an e-mail from Pearson VUE confirming the date of your examination and your individual appointment time at the test center within one day of your phone call, contact Pearson VUE.
- For detailed information about canceling a scheduled exam, please visit the *Change or Cancel a Maintenance of Certification Exam* page in the *Schedule a Maintenance of Certification Exam* section at [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org).

## Can I Take More Than One Examination?

Yes. You can register for more than one examination in the same administration; however, you may complete only one examination per day. Each individual examination is administered on a different day. This allows for greater examination security and maximizes the likelihood that all diplomates will be able to take an examination at the test center of their choice. However, because your MOC program fee includes one exam only, you will need to pay an additional exam fee for each additional exam you take.

## What Should I Expect on Exam Day?

Visit the *Exam Day: What to Expect* page in the *Take the Exam* section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org) to answer these questions:

- How is a Test Center Set Up?
- What is the Schedule for Exam Day?
- When Should I Arrive? / What if I Arrive Late?
- What Happens When I Arrive at the Test Center?
- What Identification Will I Need?
- What Identification Will I Need for the Adolescent Medicine Exam?
- What Can't I Bring to the Exam?
- How Will the Exam Start?
- What Do I Need to Know About Exam Sessions and Scheduled Breaks?
- What About Lodging and Travel?
- Where Are the Test Centers Located?
- What Should I Do If I See Cheating or Other Inappropriate Behavior?
- How Do I Contact ABIM With Questions Regarding Exam Day?

## How Can I Prepare for the Exam?

An online tutorial is available in the *Take the Exam* section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org). Becoming familiar with the computer-based exam will greatly improve your efficiency on exam day. The tutorial takes about 30 minutes and gives you the opportunity to practice:

- Answering questions
- Changing answers
- Making notes electronically
- Accessing the table of normal laboratory values
- Marking questions for review

You can also prepare by viewing each exam blueprint, which includes content areas, their relative percentages, and the approximate number of questions in each to expect on typical exam. To see exam blueprints, please visit the *Take the Exam* section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org), click on the *Details about each Exam by Specialty* page and look in the “Maintenance of Certification” column for the exam(s) you plan to take. After selecting your exam, click on the *Exam Content & Blueprint* link to view the examination blueprint.

## How is the Exam Scored?

Your score is determined by the number of questions answered correctly. There is no penalty for guessing; therefore, you should answer every question. The minimum passing score reflects an absolute standard developed by the ABIM Board of Directors and is independent of the performance of any group of candidates.

Your results will be released and a Score Report will be mailed to you within three months of the last date of the exam in that area. ABIM’s website homepage, [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org), will announce when exam results have been released, and you can then obtain your pass/fail status for an exam in the exam history section of your home page via the *Physician Login*. No additional information is available until that time. Scores are provided through the mail only.

Copies of your Score Report will be maintained for two years from the date they were released. During that period, you may obtain a copy of your Score Report upon written request. Questions regarding exam results should be submitted in writing within six months of the date results were released.

## What if I Need to Retake the Exam?

Candidates who are unsuccessful may apply for re-examination. To be granted admission, candidates must meet all applicable licensure, professional standing and procedural requirements. As long as these requirements are met, there is no restriction on the number of opportunities for re-examination. There is a charge, however, for each additional time you take an MOC exam.

## How Does ABIM Accommodate Disabilities?

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, ABIM offers its exams in a place and manner that accommodate individuals with disabilities, which includes certain persons with learning disabilities. If you have a disability and have completed the requirements for MOC, you may request assistance in taking ABIM’s exams.

The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual. An individual is not substantially limited in a major life activity if the limitation does not amount to a significant restriction when compared with the abilities of the average person. All requests for accommodation of a disability, whether mental or physical, must be submitted in writing to ABIM and received by the close of the registration period. For specific information regarding the process and documentation, or for a request for accommodation, please contact ABIM at 1-800-441-ABIM, extension 3502, or e-mail [accommodations@abim.org](mailto:accommodations@abim.org). Additional information regarding ABIM's testing accommodation policies can be found within the *Take the Exam* section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org).

## UPDATING YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

Throughout the period that you are enrolled in MOC, ABIM uses e-mail as our primary means of communicating important program information to you. That is why ABIM requires your current contact information, both your mailing and e-mail addresses, as well as your telephone number. You can update your contact information anytime on your home page in the *Physician Login* section.

## YOUR NAME IN ABIM RECORDS

ABIM uses your full, official name in its records. To change your name, or to correct the spelling of your name, you must notify ABIM in writing.

Send your changes to:

American Board of Internal Medicine  
510 Walnut Street, Suite 1700  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-3699

Fax to 215-446-3590 (use this fax number for name changes only). E-mail to [request@abim.org](mailto:request@abim.org) (if you can provide documentation in digital form; e.g., PDF).

For detailed instruction on changing your name, correcting the spelling of your name and requesting a preferred name, please visit the *Enroll & Understand Policies for Maintenance of Certification* page of the *Maintain & Renew Your Certification* section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org).

## OTHER ABIM POLICIES

For detailed information about other ABIM policies, please visit the *Enroll & Understand Policies for Maintenance of Certification* page within the *Maintain & Renew Your Certification* section of [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org).

This section includes:

- ABIM's Evaluations and Judgments
- Reporting Certification Status
- Representation of Certification Status
- Errors and Disruptions in Examination Administration
- Confidentiality Policy
- Licensure
- Substance Abuse
- Suspension and Revocation of Certification
- Irregular Behavior on Examinations
- Re-examination
- Competency in Technology

## CONTACT ABIM

If you have questions about MOC program components or requirements, contact ABIM's Contact Center:

- Internet: Click on *Contact ABIM* on the home page [www.abim.org](http://www.abim.org)
- Telephone: 215-446-3500 or 1-800-441-ABIM
- Fax: 215-446-3590
- Mail: American Board of Internal Medicine  
510 Walnut Street, Suite 1700  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-3699

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ABIM examinations are confidential, in addition to being protected by federal copyright and trade secret laws. Candidates and diplomates who undertake examinations agree that they will not copy, reproduce, adapt, disclose, or transmit examinations, in whole or in part, by any means now known or hereafter invented. They further agree that they will not reconstruct examination content from memory, by dictation, or by any other means or otherwise discuss examination content with others. Candidates and diplomates further acknowledge that disclosure or any other use of examination content may expose them to criminal as well as civil liability, and may also result in sanctions by ABIM.

With respect to ABIM's Maintenance of Certification (MOC) products, including without limitation its Self-Evaluation Process Medical Knowledge Modules and Practice Improvement Modules (PIMs), candidates are encouraged to discuss these materials with their colleagues as they develop their answers or other responses as required by the Modules. They agree, however, that, as with all ABIM materials, they will not copy, reproduce or make any adaptations of such materials in any manner; and will not assist someone else in the infringement or misuse of these or any other ABIM-copyrighted works.

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