

# ABOUT THE AMERICAN BOARD OF INTERNAL MEDICINE

## ABIM AND BOARD CERTIFICATION

Established in 1936, the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) has worked to ensure the quality of our nation's health care by certifying physicians who practice internal medicine and one or more of its 20 subspecialties – which constitutes one in four practicing physicians. ABIM is not a membership society, educational institution or licensing body, but a non-profit, independent physician evaluation organization committed to continuously improving the profession for the public good.

Through ongoing board certification programs, physicians are able to test and enhance their clinical judgment and skills. Consumers are also able to check if their physician has the knowledge needed to deliver high quality care.

ABIM Certification is recognized as a marker of a physician's professionalism, knowledge and skill. Most hospitals require certification for physicians to have admitting privileges, and many health plans mandate certification for contracting or eligibility for preferred networks.

The exams and other assessment tools used by ABIM to assess a physician's competency are developed by physicianexperts in academic medicine and in practice. These tools incorporate the latest advances in medicine with a practical focus on how medical care is delivered in physicians' offices.

ABIM's Certification and Maintenance of Certification programs provide internists and its subspecialists, including cardiologists, rheumatologists, nephrologists and others, with a relevant, useful and continually improving means of demonstrating their professional competence and development.

## THE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Internists and subspecialists are initially certified at the end of training by passing a secure exam that is administered by ABIM. Physicians certified in internal medicine or one of its subspecialties must periodically pass a secure exam and complete an intensive self-assessment and practice review to remain board certified.<sup>1</sup>

ABIM is the largest of the 24 certifying boards under the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) umbrella. ABMS sets the standards for physician certification in the United States and assists its member boards in developing and implementing standards to evaluate and certify physician specialists.

CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE: THE DIFFERENCES	
CERTIFICATION	LICENSURE
Members of the American Board of Medical Specialties	Members of the Federation of State Medical Boards
Independent, national non-profit organizations	State governed non-profit organizations with varying requirements
Evaluate and certify the knowledge, skills and attitudes of physician specialists	Issue and regulate medical licenses
Voluntary - Not required to practice medicine	Required to practice medicine

## ABIM FAST STATS

- ABIM has issued more than 300,000 certificates in internal medicine and its subspecialties in the United States and its territories since its founding.<sup>2</sup>
- From 1998-2008 ABIM certified 77,235 physicians in general internal medicine.<sup>3</sup>
- From 1998-2008 ABIM certified more than 8,000 cardiologists and more than 4,000 medical oncologists.<sup>4</sup>
- Nearly 60,000 physicians are currently enrolled in ABIM's Maintenance of Certification program.<sup>5</sup>

### NOTES

1. Internists certified prior to 1990 have certification that is valid indefinitely.
2. ABIM, March 2009
3. ABMS, 2008 Certificate Statistics
4. ABMS, 2008 Certificate Statistics
5. ABIM, December 2009.



American Board  
of Internal Medicine

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E104 -05-2010