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## The American Board of Pathology

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March 16, 2018

Dear Diplomate,

We want to share with you a brief summary of improvements to the American Board of Pathology (ABP) Continuing Certification Program (formerly known as Maintenance of Certification/MOC).

The ABP, established in 1936, began issuing time-limited certificates in 2006. Approximately one-third of practicing pathologists now participate in our Continuous Certification (CC) program and we have a 98% retention rate of enrolled diplomates. We believe that our diplomates share our commitment to life-long learning and continuous improvement in practice and see the Continuous Certification credential as demonstrating their commitment to such.

From the inception of our program, the ABP was committed to create a meaningful, relevant program for our diplomates that was not overly costly or burdensome.

- Our Life-Long Learning and Self-Assessment (LLSA) requirements are in line with the CME requirements for physician licensure in most states. The ABP does not create or sell any LLSA products; we rely on our specialty societies to provide continuing medical education.
- Our Improvement in Medical Practice (IMP) recognizes a number of quality improvement activities, many of which are part of the day-to-day practice of a pathologist. We require completion of at least one activity each year and note that most of our diplomates report many more than are required. Quality improvement has always been an essential part of the practice of pathology and laboratory medicine. Some approved IMP examples include: participation in a federally qualified pathology clinical registry, implementing a Choosing Wisely recommendation or other appropriate laboratory utilization activity, participation in an ABP approved microscopic slide review program, publication of a peer-reviewed article that improves practice or patient care, serving as an inspector on a laboratory accreditation team, successful performance on the federally-mandated cytology proficiency examination, meaningful participation in a departmental or institutional quality or patient safety committee, completion of an ABP approved patient safety course, and participation in a diplomate designed, ABP-approved, quality assurance/performance improvement activity.

- Our Assessment of Knowledge, Judgment, and Skills exams are modular, with over 90 modules that diplomates can choose from in order to make the exam relevant to their practice. The exam questions are practical, requiring interpretation or problem solving, with almost no recall type questions. Diplomates currently have six opportunities to take and pass the exam. We publish comprehensive study guides on our website to help diplomates prepare for the exam. Beginning in 2018, the exam, while still timed, will be open-book, simulating real-life practice. Diplomates are provided detailed feedback on item they missed on the exam to assist them in identifying knowledge gaps and selecting continuing education.

Our Trustees and Staff are committed to continuous improvement and investment in our Continuous Certification program. Some of these include:

- Creation of a Continuous Certification Advisory Committee composed of a cross-section of diplomates in varied practice settings. We meet each month by conference call. We have learned much from their input and have incorporated many of their suggestions to improve our program.
- We are partnering with the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education for electronic reporting of diplomates' CME activities directly to the ABP, eliminating the time and effort for reporting CME and the need for auditing. This will be offered at no cost to diplomates.
- In 2015, we began administration of the Assessment of Knowledge, Judgment, and Skills exam via remote, secure testing, eliminating the cost of travel and burden of time away from work and family to come to the ABP exam center in Tampa, FL.
- We will begin a pilot of ABPath CertLink™ in July 2018, which is a longitudinal assessment of knowledge and learning that will likely be an alternative to the once every ten-year exam. Initially there will be no charge for participation.
- We are investing in replacement of our diplomate tracking and reporting system to make it more user friendly and adaptable. We will be replacing our website to make it more intuitive and navigable. We are expanding our use of social media and other communication vehicles to better engage diplomates.
- We have added a public member to the board of Trustees to broaden our perspective and insight.
- We meet at least annually with companion societies to receive their feedback and rely on them for provision of CME and some IMP activities.

Our Board is committed to a meaningful and relevant Continuous Certification program that demonstrates to the public and the profession that our diplomates are current in their medical knowledge and are continually striving to improve their practice and provide excellent patient care.

An independent Commission has been created to assess the status of continuing board certification and make recommendations to help enable the current process to become a system that demonstrates the profession's commitment to professional self-regulation, offers a consistent and clear understanding of what continuing certification means, and establishes a meaningful, relevant and valuable program that meets the highest standard of quality patient care. For more information about the Commission go to: <https://visioninitiative.org/commission-members-announced-for-vision-initiative/>

As always, we welcome your comments and feedback.

Sincerely,

The Trustees of the American Board of Pathology