

FROM THE SOCIETY: PART III

Changes to MOC

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On January 1, the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) changed its requirements for maintenance of certification (MOC). This change, part of a broader series of changes mandated by the American Board of Medical Specialties (which oversees ABIM as well as other specialty boards), reflects a belief that the public's concept of "certification" implies continuous updated knowledge and skills rather than a one-time or even decennial process. Even in this new process, many things have not changed. For example, continued certification still requires successful completion of four elements: an active medical license, self-evaluation of medical knowledge, self-evaluation of practice assessment ("PIMs"), and a secure MOC exam. The content and structure of these elements has also not changed, nor has the requirement for a secure MOC exam every 10 years. What has changed, however, is the amount and frequency of the medical knowledge and practice assessment requirements, the new patient sur-

vey and patient safety requirements, and how certification is maintained and reported to the public.

Prior to January 1, physicians who were certified by ABIM ("ABIM diplomates") were either certified for 10 years or, for those certified before 1990, for life. Under the new MOC program, in addition to reporting the status of a physician's certification (certified or not certified), ABIM will report whether a physician is "Meeting MOC Requirements" (Figure 1). In addition, all new certifications (including re-certification) will no longer have a fixed 10-year lifespan. Rather, certification will depend on meeting MOC requirements. This means that:

- Current "time-limited" certification holders (certified between 1991-2013) will be reported as either "Certified, Meeting MOC Requirements: Yes" or "Certified, Meeting MOC Requirements: No" until the expiration date of their certificate. Thereafter, they will be listed as "Certified: Meeting MOC Requirements: Yes" or "Not Certified."
- Current life-long certification holders (certified before 1990) will be reported as either "Certified, Meeting MOC Requirements: Yes" or "Certified, Meeting MOC Requirements: No" indefinitely. They will *not* lose their certifications due to the changes to the MOC program.

An unknown is whether hospitals, insurers, and other third parties will distinguish "Certified, Meeting MOC Requirements: Yes" and "Certified, Meeting MOC Requirements: No" in their decision-making.

In order to remain "current" in MOC (and certified after a prior 10-year certificate expires), the first and most important step is to be enrolled in MOC. Enrollment is done by accessing the ABIM website (www.abim.org). ABIM currently offers both an annual payment plan and a 10-year pre-payment plan. If you were enrolled in MOC before January 1, 2014, you may still be enrolled and have a fee credit. Physicians newly certified in internal medicine will receive a waiver of their annual MOC fee for the year after they pass the internal medicine certification exam.

Second, ABIM requires that you complete some MOC activity every two years. This activity can be a medical knowledge activity, a practice assessment activity, or even an MOC exam. Medical knowledge and practice assessment activities are stand-alone activities offered by both

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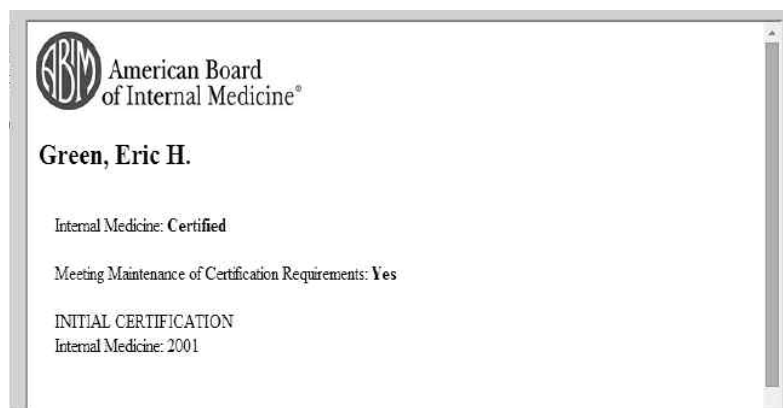


Figure 1. Public Reporting—ABIM Website

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Table 1. Summary of MOC Process

Activity	Time frame	Notes
Be enrolled in MOC	Do <i>now</i> and keep active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enroll through ABIM Annual or 10-year payment options
Complete <i>any</i> ABIM-approved MOC activity	Every 2 years (e.g. by 12/31/15 and every two years thereafter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be product created by ABIM or created by another organization (SGIM, ACP, etc.) and approved by ABIM These points count for five-year totals
Complete 100 points of ABIM MOC activities	Every 5 years (e.g. by 12/31/18 and every five years thereafter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 20 points in medical knowledge At least 20 points in practice assessment (e.g. PIM) Must also meet patient safety and patient survey requirements Products can be ABIM created or created by another organization (SGIM, ACP, etc.) and approved by ABIM
Complete a secure exam	Every 10 years; life-long certificate holders, before 12/31/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure exam counts for 20 MOC points

ABIM and other professional medical societies (including SGIM). Each activity has an MOC “point value” that is proportionate to the amount of work required. In addition, many of the activities approved for MOC points include CME credits. ABIM modules can be accessed through their website; modules created by professional societies may be listed on the ABIM website but currently don’t “link out.” A number of mechanisms exist for physicians to utilize current quality improvement projects for MOC points; in future *Forum* columns, we will discuss this more.

Every five years, each physician must earn a total of 100 MOC points. These 100 points *include* whatever points were earned to fulfill the every-two-year requirement. Of these 100 points, at least 20 points must be earned in medical knowledge and 20 points in practice assessment. The remaining 60 points can be any combination of these two categories. Every five years at least one patient safety activity and one patient survey activity must be completed. The ABIM currently grants MOC credit both for participation in an ACGME-approved

fellowship (20 points/year) and for the first attempt in a secure exam (pass or fail, 20 points). General internal medicine (GIM) fellows note that GIM fellowships are not ACGME approved in most cases.

Currently, every 10 years the “secure exam” is required. The ABIM has heard physician concerns about the secure exam as well as other aspects of the MOC process through physicians themselves and societies such as SGIM. Their Assessment 2020 project (<http://assessment2020.abim.org/>) is designed to allow ABIM’s assessment measures to have the potential to evolve as our profession does.

In the end, the MOC process has become much more complicated, and for any individual, the “devil is in the details.” In anticipation of this, ABIM enhanced its website (Figure 2). Physicians can view their own requirements for MOC on the ABIM website with a high degree of specificity that wasn’t available before 2014. Specific questions about an individual’s requirements are best addressed by ABIM; if the website doesn’t answer your question, their phone number is 1-800-441-ABIM.

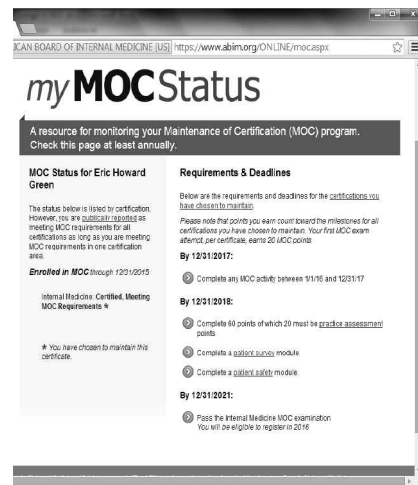


Figure 2. Physician page—ABIM Website

In future *Forum* columns, we’ll try to address some common challenges and questions regarding medical knowledge and practice assessment selection and completion. In the meantime, feel free to put general questions, advice, concerns, and praise on GIM Connect. We’ll do our best to answer the questions and make sure concerns and praise are relayed back to the ABIM to improve the process.

SGIM