



New Subspecialty of Addiction Medicine – UPDATE February 13, 2017

Addiction Medicine: New Subspecialty

The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) recognized Addiction Medicine (ADM) as a new subspecialty sponsored and administered by ABPM; physicians certified by any of the 24 Member Boards of the ABMS are eligible to apply for certification. These FAQs and the ABPM website will be the primary sources of information about the requirements and application for the new subspecialty.

What is an 'ADM' physician's focus?

An ABMS certified physician who subspecializes in Addiction Medicine is concerned with the prevention, evaluation, diagnosis, treatment, and recovery of persons with the disease of addiction, of those with substance-related health conditions, and of people who show unhealthy use of substances including nicotine, alcohol, prescription medications and other licit and illicit drugs. Physicians in this subspecialty also help family members whose health and functioning are affected by a loved one's substance use or addiction.

When will the first examination be available?

The first certification examination is anticipated to be administered in the fall of 2017; details regarding the examination application are being finalized and will be posted on this website as soon as they are available. The application period, at this time, is anticipated to be open in April and May of 2017.

Who can take the examination when it becomes available?

Physicians who are already certified by any of the 24 Member Boards of the ABMS are eligible to apply. During the first five years the examination is given, individuals will be qualified by the Practice Pathway.

What is the Practice Pathway?

The Practice Pathway is the mechanism in place for physicians to meet eligibility requirements for certification in Addiction Medicine without completing an ADM fellowship. This pathway will be available for the first five years the new subspecialty examination is administered. For Addiction Medicine, the five-year interval is from 2017 through 2021.

What are the eligibility requirements?

There are four required components:

1. Possession of an appropriate medical degree or its equivalent

An applicant must have graduated from a medical school in the United States, a school of osteopathic medicine, an accredited medical school in Canada, or from a medical school outside the U.S. and Canada that is deemed satisfactory to the Board.

2. Current certification by at least one ABMS Member Board

Diplomates from any ABMS Member Board may apply for this subspecialty certificate. Diplomates will be required to maintain their primary certificate.

3. Completion of specified education and training or experience in the subspecialty field through one of the following pathways:

a. Practice Pathway

Two tracks are available in the Practice Pathway

i) Time in Practice: For a period of five years from the date when the ABPM begins receiving applications for certification in Addiction Medicine, an applicant must submit documentation of a minimum of 1,920 hours in which they were engaged in the practice of Addiction Medicine at the subspecialty level; this minimum of 1920 hours must occur over at least 24 of the previous 60 months prior to application. The minimum of 24 months of practice time need not be continuous; however, all practice time must have occurred in the five-year interval immediately preceding application for certification. Practice must consist of broad-based professional activity with significant Addiction Medicine responsibility. Documentation of Addiction Medicine teaching, research and administration activities, as well as clinical care or prevention of, or treatment of, individuals who are at risk for or have a substance use disorder may be considered.

ii) Non-Accredited Fellowship Training: Credit for completion of training in a non-ACGME accredited fellowship program may be substituted for the Time in Practice track in i) above. The applicant must have successfully completed an Addiction Medicine fellowship of at least 12 months that is acceptable to the American Board of Preventive Medicine. The fellowship training curriculum as well as a description of the actual training experience must also be submitted. The Non-ACGME accredited fellowships are those currently accredited through The Addiction Medicine Foundation (TAMF). Fellowship training of less than 12 months may be applied towards the Time in Practice hour requirements of the Practice Pathway.

b. Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Accredited Fellowship Training Pathway

Successful completion of a minimum of 12 months in an ACGME- accredited Addiction Medicine fellowship program. If the program is longer than 12 months, the physician must successfully complete all years of training for which the program is accredited in order to meet the eligibility criteria for certification.

4. Medical Licensure

A current, unrestricted and valid license to practice medicine in a state, the District of Columbia, a territory, commonwealth, or possession of the United States or in a province of Canada is required. For physicians with a medical license in more than one state, no license may be restricted, revoked, or suspended or currently under such notice. The license(s) of all applicants are verified and confirmed, and licensure may be investigated. Licensure must be valid and unrestricted at the time of application and must be maintained throughout the application process and throughout certification.

When will ACGME fellowships be available?

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has approved the accreditation of fellowships in the subspecialty of Addiction Medicine. The specific requirements for the ACGME- accredited fellowships in Addiction Medicine are currently under development. Institutions seeking ACGME accreditation for Addiction Medicine fellowships should contact the ACGME and follow their requirements.

What about fellowships developed through The Addiction Medicine Foundation (TAMF)?

Applicants who have completed existing fellowships that are not ACGME accredited will be given consideration by the ABPM through the Practice Pathway. The details of this consideration are outlined above in “What are the eligibility requirements?” and specifically under section 3a. Practice Pathway and then section ii). Non-Accredited Fellowship Training.

How will certification by the American Board of Addiction Medicine (ABAM) be considered?

Applicants holding certification by ABAM must meet the medical licensure and ABMS certification requirements to be considered for the Addiction Medicine subspecialty examination.

Will ABAM certificants be required to take the examination?

All ABAM certificants will be required to apply for and take the examination, with one exception. For individuals who passed the 2015 ABAM examination and who, upon review of their application, meet all ABPM requirements, the examination will be waived and certification will be conferred following usual procedures, with an effective date of January 1st of 2018 for applicants in 2017. This waiver applies only to individuals who passed the 2015 ABAM examination and who meet the other eligibility requirements. This exception, for 2015 ABAM certificants only, will be available for applications submitted during the current Practice Pathway period.

Do I need to maintain my ABAM certification with the ABAM MOC program to be considered for the Subspecialty Addiction Medicine examination?

While the ABPM supports the commitment to lifelong learning embodied in MOC, the ABPM has no requirements for maintaining certification through any non-ABMS Member Board.

What is the expedited application process for current ABAM diplomates?

Applicants determined by ABAM as being current ABAM diplomates will receive from ABAM documentation of that status and this documentation will be submitted to ABPM as part of the application process. This ABAM documentation of status will be used to meet the required attestation of clinical competence.

What will be the MOC requirements once I become certified in Addiction Medicine by ABPM?

The Addiction Medicine requirements and features of continuous certification are being developed and will likely closely parallel those of other ABPM subspecialties. These include a ten-year certification cycle length, a valid and unrestricted license to practice in all jurisdictions in which one is licensed, lifelong learning in ABPM approved activities, successful participation in a secure examination, and verification of improvement in practice, i.e., the four parts of continuous certification.

When can I get more information?

The ABPM is the administering board for the subspecialty of Addiction Medicine. Details of and updates to the application and certification processes will be posted on this ABPM website as soon as they become available. Emails or calls to ABPM will be referred to this website.