



# American Academy of Sleep Medicine

July 13, 2015

James Kennedy, MD  
Chair, Board of Directors  
American Board of Family  
Medicine  
1648 McGrathiana Parkway,  
5th Floor  
Lexington, KY 40511

SENT VIA EMAIL

c/o Dr. James Puffer: [jpuffer@theabfm.org](mailto:jpuffer@theabfm.org)

Dear Dr. Kennedy:

On behalf of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), the leading professional society representing physicians who are board certified in the subspecialty of sleep medicine, I am writing to express widespread concern among our leadership and members regarding the American Board of Family Medicine's requirements for maintaining specialty certification.

Recently, the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) announced that it is no longer requiring physicians to maintain underlying certification to stay certified in a subspecialty. Richard J. Baron, MD, President and CEO of ABIM, stated in an online announcement that, "While those underlying disciplines are important in building the foundation of knowledge for initial overlying subspecialty certification, keeping the underlying certification MOC requirement in place did not account for the increased specialization of these physicians' practices over their careers. As we work to increase the relevancy of the Maintenance of Certification program for physicians, we want to give them greater flexibility to choose to recertify in those areas that best reflect what they are doing in practice."

The AASM leadership believes that his statements apply to all sleep medicine physicians, regardless of whether they are certified by the ABIM or ABFM. We encourage you to take a similar action by removing the requirement of maintaining specialty certification to remain certified in a subspecialty such as sleep medicine.

We understand that all 24 member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) have autonomy when implementing their MOC programs. However, it is important to note that the ABFM is now one of only two ABMS member boards, along with the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

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(ABPN), that requires physicians subspecializing in sleep medicine to maintain specialty certification. We are sending a similar request to the ABPN.

The requirement to maintain specialty certification is financially burdensome and does not align with the reality of the practice of subspecialty medicine in today's healthcare landscape. The AASM is hopeful that the ABFM will respond to the needs of its diplomates by discontinuing the requirement for sleep specialists to maintain underlying certification.

To discuss any of these issues in more detail, please contact AASM Executive Director Jerome Barrett at (630) 737-9700.

I thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "NFWatson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Nathaniel F. Watson, MD, MSc  
President

cc: Jerome A. Barrett, Executive Director, AASM  
James C. Puffer, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer, ABFM