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Contact: Drew Carlson, (817) 868-4043;

dcarlson@fsmb.org; www.fsmb.org

FSMB Report Provides Roadmap For Maintenance of Licensure

Parameters for lifelong learning intended to help physicians transition to new system

(Dallas, April 28, 2010) – The Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) has approved a report that lays the groundwork for strengthening the medical licensure renewal process by implementing new standards for lifelong learning among physicians.

Under the current licensure renewal system, physicians are required by a majority of state medical and osteopathic boards to self-report their engagement in continuing medical education activities. Under FSMB's proposed system, known as Maintenance of Licensure (MOL), current requirements will be expanded by having physicians participate in a more robust program of continuous professional development that is relevant to their areas of practice, measured against objective data sources and aimed at improving performance over time. When fully implemented, MOL will encourage and support lifelong learning by all of the nation's licensed physicians and create a system to confirm their practice improvement efforts.

The Maintenance of Licensure report is the latest step in a seven-year process of study and analysis by FSMB intended to better align the current continuing medical education system with maintenance of clinical competency and quality among physicians. It was approved by FSMB's policy-making House of Delegates with overwhelming support during the organization's annual meeting in Chicago in April.

The report offers a model policy that state medical and osteopathic boards can build upon as they consider the development of MOL systems. It will align and incorporate the work of other medical organizations, including the nation's specialty societies, which have begun initiatives to promote enhanced quality and public safety through promotion of medical education.

“This sentinel initiative by FSMB advances a concept that will strengthen its member state medical and osteopathic boards’ ability to carry out their mission of public protection, ensuring the highest quality of care and patient safety as well as promoting physician practice improvement,” said Martin Crane, M.D., immediate past chair of the FSMB Board of Directors.

“As the awareness of, and the emphasis on, quality and safety in health care continues to increase, it is incumbent on our member state medical and osteopathic boards to be responsive, to evolve and to offer solutions that demonstrate our commitment to our patients and to the standards of excellence that have long been a hallmark of American medicine,” Dr. Crane said. “Our patients want and deserve no less than this, and FSMB’s MOL plan, developed in collaboration with other stakeholders in health care, offers a practical, pragmatic approach to ensure that we provide it. MOL is one of the initiatives that are creating a ‘culture of improvement in medicine.’”

The nation’s state medical and osteopathic boards formally adopted a policy in 2004 approving the concept that ongoing demonstration of competence should be a condition of medical licensure renewal. Since that policy passed, various FSMB committees and task forces have worked on creating a system that could be integrated with other lifelong learning initiatives – such as the Maintenance of Certification (MOC) process implemented by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), the Osteopathic Continuous Certification (OCC) process implemented by the American Osteopathic Association’s Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists and physicians’ Continuing Medical Education (CME) activities.

The report, suggests, for example, that state medical boards should have the discretion to determine that a physician’s MOC and OCC activities could represent “substantial compliance” with MOL – thus minimizing any potential redundancy or duplication between the two lifelong learning processes.

According to the report, a majority of physicians are likely already participating in many of FSMB’s recommended MOL activities. The report suggests a multi-year process of implementation for an MOL system, ensuring that physicians have ample time to adapt to new learning requirements.

“Many steps are still ahead before the concept of MOL becomes a part of every physician’s ongoing professional development,” said Humayun Chaudhry, D.O., FACP, president and CEO of the FSMB. “This report offers a general roadmap to take us there in a way that both protects patients and takes into account the needs of the overall medical community.”

The report and other information about FSMB’s Maintenance of Licensure initiative are available at www.fsmb.org.

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