

**The Alphabet Soup of Medicine;
What they do and the Interactions between the
Various Organizations Related to ABPN**

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Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and Residency Review Committee

The Liaison Committee for Graduate Medical Education was established in 1972 and became the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) in 1981. The ACGME is a non-profit organization that reviews and accredits medical residency programs in the United States.

The ACGME consists of 28 Residency Review Committees (RRC), one for each specialty plus a Transitional Review Committee and an Institutional Review Committee. Each committee includes several volunteer physicians appointed by the American Medical Association (AMA) Council on Medical Education and by the related medical specialty Boards and specialty organizations.

There are five member organizations of the ACGME. They are the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), American Hospital Association, American Medical Association, Association of American Medical Colleges, and the Council of Medical Specialty Societies. The Board of Directors consists of four directors appointed by each organization, two resident physicians, three public directors, the Chair of the Council of Review Committee Chairs, and a non-voting federal representative.

“The mission of the ACGME is to improve health care by assessing and advancing the quality of resident physicians’ education through accreditation.”¹

Approximately every five years, the RRC for neurology revises the Program Requirements for Residency Education. There are separate requirements for neurology, child neurology, and the related subspecialties. These requirements are published on the ACGME website, www.acgme.org. Minor revisions to the requirements are issued periodically between the major revisions. There are also requirements that are common across all specialties.

Residency programs are accredited when they are in broad compliance with the requirements. Programs not in compliance are cited for their deficiencies, and can be withdrawn from accreditation. Approved residency programs can be found in the *Graduate Medical Education Directory* or on the ACGME website. Also available on the website are information about the review process and the various forms needed to achieve accreditation.

¹ “GME-related Organizations: Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) in Graduate Medical Education Directory, 2008-2009, p. 24, American Medical Association

According to the ACGME website accessed on September 8, 2008, there are currently 125 ACGME-accredited neurology residency programs training 1748 residents. There are 69 accredited child neurology programs with 278 residents. Neurology and child neurology subspecialties include 90 clinical neurophysiology programs with 221 fellows, one endovascular surgical neuroradiology program with two fellows, seven neurodevelopmental disabilities programs with 14 fellows, and 53 vascular neurology programs with 37 fellows.

American Board of Medical Specialties

The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) is the umbrella organization over the 24 specialty certifying Boards. “The primary function of the ABMS is to assist the member Boards in developing and implementing educational and professional standards to evaluate and certify physician specialists. The ABMS also focuses on strengthening public awareness of the value of specialty certification.”²

The ABMS defines their mission as, “ABMS is the organization that establishes standards for physician specialty certification and ABMS Maintenance of Certification (MOC), including performance assessment. ABMS communicates information about these standards to support the public’s quest for safe, high-quality healthcare.”²

Together with the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, the ABMS and the 24 specialty Boards establish requirements for certification in the various specialties and subspecialties.

American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology

As one of the specialty Boards and a member Board of the ABMS, the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology is responsible for credentialing, examination, and certification of physicians in the specialties of psychiatry, neurology, and neurology with special qualification in child neurology. Established in 1935, the ABPN also examines and certifies in the subspecialties that fall under the three specialties. They are: addiction psychiatry, child and adolescent psychiatry, clinical neurophysiology, forensic psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, hospice and palliative medicine, neurodevelopmental disabilities, neuromuscular medicine, pain medicine, psychosomatic medicine, sleep medicine, and vascular neurology.

The mission of the ABPN is to, “serve the public interest and the professions of psychiatry and neurology by promoting excellence in practice through certification and maintenance of certification processes.”³

The ABPN works with residency programs to assure that residents receive training that meets ACGME requirements. Other than in very select cases such as special programs that offer combined training in an ABPN specialty and another specialty, the American

² “Moving Forward Together: 2007 Reference Handbook and Certificate Statistics” ABMS, p 1

³ Information for Applicants, ABPN, 2009 p. 1

Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) will only accept for examination, physicians who have completed training in programs accredited by the ACGME. Physicians who meet the credentialing requirements are accepted for examination. Those who pass the examination become Board certified and are diplomates of the Board in their particular specialty.

All certificates issued by ABPN since October 1, 1994 are ten-year, time-limited certificates. To maintain their time-limited certificate, physicians must complete the maintenance of certification (MOC) program prior to the expiration of their certificate. All certificates expire December 31, ten years after they are issued.

Medical Education Accreditation

The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) is the accrediting authority for medical education programs leading to the M.D. degree in the United States and Canada. It is sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Medical Association. The American Osteopathic Association Commission on Osteopathic Accreditation (AOA COCA) is the accrediting authority for colleges of osteopathic medicine.

Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates

The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) assesses the readiness of international medical graduates to enter residency programs in the United States. These residents receive a visa to train in the United States sponsored by ECFMG.

Physicians who wish to enter ACGME-accredited residency programs in the United States will have completed their medical education in a medical program accredited by the LCME, the AOA COCA, or will have achieved a certificate from the ECFMG. Admission to a neurology residency program by a physician who completed an AOA-accredited medical school may require an additional year of ACGME-accredited residency training prior to admission.

American Academy of Neurology

The American Academy of Neurology (AAN) is the specialty society for neurologists. It was established in 1948, and represents over 21,000 neurologists and neuroscience professionals. According to their website accessed on September 9, 2008:

“The American Academy of Neurology is a medical specialty society established to advance the art and science of neurology, and thereby promote the best possible care for patients with neurological disorders...”⁴

⁴ About Us: www.aan.com

United States Medical Licensing Exam

The United States Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) is sponsored by the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), and the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME). It is a three part examination that is taken by all medical students and residents and is a requirement to receive a medical license in the United States.

The attached chart titled “Who We Are” illustrates the relationships between the various organizations described above.

References

“About ACGME” on www.acgme.org.

“About Us” on www.aan.com.

“GME-related Organizations: Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) in Graduate Medical Education Directory, 2008-2009, p. 24, American Medical Association.

Information for Applicants publication, ABPN, 2009.

Moving Forward Together: 2007 Reference Handbook and Certificate Statistics” ABMS, 2007.

“Number of Accredited Programs by Academic Year (7/1/2008 - 6/30/2009)” on www.acgme.org.