Promoting Your Provider Reward & Recognition Program:

A TOOLKIT FROM THE AMERICAN BOARD OF INTERNAL MEDICINE
ABIM and Maintenance of Certification

Who is the American Board of Internal Medicine?

The American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) is an independent, not-for-profit organization that grants board certification – a well-accepted marker of physician quality – to internists and subspecialists in internal medicine. Certification is a rigorous, comprehensive program for evaluating physician knowledge, skills and attitudes to assure both patients and payers that a physician has demonstrated a high level of competence for practice in a given field. Visit www.abim.org to learn more about the organization.

What is ABIM’s Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Program?

In 2006, the American Board of Medical Specialties’ (ABMS) 24 Member Boards adopted a program of continuous professional development – Maintenance of Certification (MOC) – as a formal means of measuring a physician’s continued competency in his or her certified specialty and/or subspecialty. MOC encompasses the six areas established by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and sets the stage for continuous professional development through values centered on lifelong learning and quality improvement.

The American Board of Internal Medicine requires that internists and subspecialists certified in 1990 or later renew their certificates every 10 years through ABIM’s MOC program. Physicians who were certified prior to this date are strongly urged to participate, since the program ultimately helps improve the quality of care delivered to patients.

What is the Value of ABIM’s Maintenance of Certification Program?

MOC promotes lifelong learning and the enhancement of the clinical judgment and skills essential for high-quality patient care. The benefits from meeting the requirements of the program are clear. Successful completion of the program is evidence that a physician has met rigorous standards through intensive study, self-assessment, evaluation, and engagement in quality improvement activities.

What Is the Link between MOC and Quality Improvement?

As part of the MOC program, physicians engage in quality improvement efforts for their practice. Physicians can keep their medical knowledge up-to-date, and improve their practice operations, by completing a Practice Improvement Module (PIMSM). Each of the 16 available PIMs is tailored for a specific target condition, such as Hypertension, Diabetes and Asthma. Through PIMs, physicians engage in a through self-assessment effort – examining their systems of medical practice, evaluating patient charts, and implementing an improvement plan.

The Reward and/or Recognition Program

Why Do Health Plans Recognize ABIM’s Maintenance of Certification Program?

Health plans are increasingly recognizing the value of ABIM’s Certification and MOC programs as relevant measures of performance in practice. Plans also are recognizing, through their reward and/or
recognition programs, board certified internists or subspecialists who have enrolled in ABIM’s MOC program and are completing PIMs. Many of these plans require physicians to evaluate their performance using data derived from their patient populations. The PIMs rely on patient and practice data as well, and represent an opportunity for physicians to reduce redundancy in data collection and measurement.

**Why Should Physicians Participate in Reward and/or Recognition Programs? How Can They Benefit?**

Reward and/or recognition programs champion the physicians who are engaged in quality improvement activities in an effort to deliver the best possible care to their patients. In a Physician Directory, a completed PIM designation will show patients that a physician’s quality improvement work distinguishes him/her from other network providers. Reward programs facilitate the quality improvement process by offering monetary compensation to physicians who engage in quality improvement efforts.

**Frequently Asked Questions about PIMs**

**What is a PIM?**
A PIM is a web-based tool that enables physicians to conduct a confidential self-evaluation of the medical care that they provide. PIMs are developed by a team of physicians with clinical and quality expertise. Currently, ABIM offers 17 PIMs, including those that are self-directed, hospital-based, and by specialty. A complete list of PIMs can be found at [http://www.abim.org/pims/](http://www.abim.org/pims/).

**What Are the Benefits of PIMs?**
PIMs help physicians improve the quality of patient care. Through analyzing data from the practice, and developing and implementing a plan to target areas for improvement, PIMs enable physicians to apply quality measurement to their practices, and then use the resulting data to take actions to improve care. Physicians can demonstrate the quality of care they deliver with data from their practice, and use that data for improvement, reporting, and upholding the professional value of accountability.

**How Do PIMs Differ from Other Knowledge or Education Tools?**
Other traditional self-evaluation tools test medical knowledge in a specific specialty or field of medicine. In contrast, PIMs focus on quality improvement and practice performance.

**How Do PIMs Work?**
PIMs guide physicians through collecting data from their own practice – potentially using chart reviews and/or patient surveys, and a practice system survey – to create a comprehensive practice performance assessment. The physician then submits the data electronically to ABIM. The data is electronically synthesized and the physician is provided a summary report. This detailed performance report serves as the basis for the physician to develop an improvement plan. After implementing the improvement plan, the physician reports the impact of the intervention to ABIM.
Physicians Complete a PIM As Follows:

**Step 1: Data Collection and Submission, Practice Analysis**
Physicians collect data on their practice via patient and/or peer surveys, chart reviews, or data from an approved outside source. Patients and/or peers complete the survey through the web. Data from patient charts is entered into the web-based tool by the physician, who then examines the systems of his/her medical practice.

[Please Note: Physicians are asked to create their own patient identifier (i.e. 001, 002, 003) so the patient can be identified by the physician if necessary. We ask physicians to avoid using SSN or chart numbers as identifiers. All patient data collected are anonymous.]

**Step 2: Performance Report**
Once the necessary data in Step 1 is submitted, a performance report can be requested from ABIM. With some exceptions, physicians can generally expect to receive their report in one hour.

**Step 3: Physician Practice Improvement Plan**
The physician reviews the information in the summary report to determine areas for improvement. He/she then develops a plan to improve in the selected areas, using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) rapid improvement cycle process.

**Step 4: Remeasurement & Results**
Once the improvement intervention is articulated, the physician is asked to choose the method of measuring the impact of the intervention on a sample population. For instance, a physician can choose to re-survey patients, review patient charts and analyze the results, or use anecdotal references to analyze the data. After the remeasurement is completed, the physician answers questions about the outcome of the improvement plan’s implementation and reports on the analysis, the results of the focused re-measurement, lessons learned from the experience, and possible next steps. Once the results are reported, the PIM is complete and may be submitted to ABIM for credit.

**What If I Have a Question about PIMs?**
If you have a question while completing the PIM, you can e-mail your question to kcaviston@abim.org or contact Kevin Caviston by phone at 1.215.399.4006.
Physician Testimonials on Maintenance of Certification and PIMs

Following are excerpts from testimonials by physicians who have completed Maintenance of Certification and PIMs. You may use these to illustrate the value of your programs when communicating to providers. Full versions of these testimonials, as well as others, are available at www.abim.org. We will inform you when they have been posted.

**Maintenance of Certification**

“I would encourage doctors to recertify regardless of their practice situations. It is a worthwhile process. Society expects it of us since our patients’ livelihood is in our hands, so it is not unreasonable. Ultimately I think recertifying was beneficial for me and my patients, and I suspect other doctors would have a similar experience.”

“I found that ABIM’s Maintenance of Certification (MOC) process does have a tangible impact on the way I practice medicine. It helped me broaden the differential diagnoses, made me more familiar with newer tests, and allowed me to think critically. It also improved my insight on when and how to refer a patient to a specialist. Being disciplined in educating ourselves is always good for patients. MOC challenged me to reflect on my work that is evidence-based, community standard or cutting edge, and it helps me aim at improving the quality of care I provide to patients.”

**Practice Improvement Module**

“When I elected to begin my Maintenance of Certification process early, it made sense to complete the Communication – Subspecialists Practice Improvement Module (PIM). Completing the module was a great experience, as it proved to be a valid feedback tool in terms of what my patients thought of my medical care delivery. In subtle ways, I realized after I completed the PIM that I spent more time with patients and drew more out of them, and they were more satisfied with their care as a result.”

“When I practiced medicine in India, diabetes was a common condition, so it made sense to complete the Diabetes Practice Improvement Module (PIM). The module highlighted several areas where I could improve my quality of care. These included my methodologies for electronic record keeping, patient follow-up, care coordination and performance monitoring. Beneficial changes stemming from my Diabetes PIM, no matter how small, go a long way towards improving the quality of care that I deliver to my patients.”

“My MOC participation has influenced our ER’s treatment of community-acquired pneumonia (CAP). I completed the Hospital-Based Patient Care Practice Improvement Module (PIM) as part of the Self-Evaluation of Practice Performance requirement, and through it, I explored ways to improve antibiotic use to treat CAP. Through the PIM, I found our ER was taking too long to start antibiotics because of the time needed to obtain the medication from the hospital pharmacy. Now, the antibiotics are kept within the ER for faster distribution. This simple change has made a real difference.”
How to Submit a Completed PIM: Step-by-Step Screenshots

The ABIM Homepage, at www.abim.org

1) Once you complete a PIM, you may submit it, at any time, to your affiliated health plan to participate in their provider recognition and/or reward program.

When you decide to submit your PIM to a health plan, direct your web browser to our website, www.abim.org, and click on the “Physician Login” link in the upper right hand corner.
2) On the Physician Login page, you will be asked to enter your 6-digit ABIM candidate number and your password. If you do not remember your password, follow the on-screen prompts to have it emailed to your address on file.
3) Once you are logged into your Physician Homepage, click on the link that says “Optional Reporting to Third Parties.”
4) On the “Optional Reporting to Third Parties” page, you will see two dropdown boxes at the bottom, one that says “Select an organization” and one below it which says “Select a completed PIM.”
5) Click on the dropdown menu “Select an organization” and choose the health plan to which you would like to submit your PIM.
6) Once you have chosen your health plan, click on “Select a completed PIM.” Any PIM(s) you have completed will be listed in this menu for selection.
7) Once you have selected the PIM you wish to submit to your health plan, you will be asked to provide an ID number (Medical License Number, NPI, UPIN, etc). This verification will be the final step before your data is sent by ABIM to the selected health plan, so be sure that all of the entered information is correct. To authorize ABIM to forward your PIM data, click on “Send My Information.” Please note that recognition from your health plan may take between 8 and 12 weeks from the time of submission due to our varying reporting cycles.