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Faux Board Certifications

The American Board of Certification in Medical Optometry (ABCMO), incorporated in 2009, is an independent specialty board providing national certification of optometrists who are specialists in medical optometry. Certification requires completion of an ACOE accredited post-graduate residency in medical optometry, passage of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry written specialty examination, “Advanced Competence in Medical Optometry”, and the active practice of medical optometry.

Health care credentialing bodies recognize board certification as attainment of specialist status resulting from residency training and passage of a written specialty examination testing advanced competency and require it of those seeking privileges as a specialist

Optometrists, by their degrees and state licenses, are general practitioners, not specialists, and are not required to be board certified as specialists at accredited health care facilities. “Any licensed provider” rules, panels and the 2010 Health Care Act do not require board certification of general practice optometrists or other defined-license general practitioners such as dentists whose degrees and licenses qualify them for general practice.

Two groups, however, offer voluntary “board certification in optometry” to certify continuing competence in general practice optometry. But continuing competence is the legal responsibility of state optometry boards that require mandatory maintenance of license programs (MOL) for license renewal. No study has shown general practice optometrists do not maintain competence and credible professions do not use voluntary continuing competence programs of no legal standing. In addition, the purpose of board certification is not to ensure continuing competence of general practitioners but to denote attainment of specialist status.

These groups have misnamed, and are marketing, their programs as “board certification in optometry” even though neither requires residency training and one requires no written examination while the other tests competence only at the level of general practice.

Similarly misleading board certifications in medicine are not recognized by credentialing bodies of accredited health facilities and state medical boards challenge their public use. Recently, several state optometry boards stated these “board certifications in optometry” cannot be cited to the public and do not denote advanced competence. For detailed information see “[Faux Certifications](#)” posted at www.abcmo.org.

State medical boards (www.afsmb.org) are studying their MOL programs and may strengthen them. A study to determine if optometry MOL programs ensure continuing competence of general practitioners may be advisable. But voluntary programs, before such study, misleadingly named board certification in optometry hold no value for general practice optometrists and will not be recognized by credentialing bodies.