



NBEO White Paper

Summit on Board Certification and Continued Competence

In 1999 the AOA offered “board certification” to general practitioners by forming the American Board of Optometric Practice (ABOP) that essentially required passage of a multiple choice examination having 100 questions. General practitioners showed little interest and AOA ended its funding.

ABOP had been ridiculed (Google “An Optometrist Has a Physical”) and the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry and Association of Regulatory Bodies of Optometry had stood on the sidelines. In 2001, the NBEO issued the following White Paper when the AOA resurrected the issue of board certification for general practitioners.

At that time AOA had “board certification envy” from a belief that since most physicians were board certified specialists, general practice optometrists were at a public relations and political disadvantage even though AOA still maintained our professional degree and state license prepared us to practice optometry as it did for dentistry and other defined-license prescribing health professions.

The AOA did not appear to understand legitimate health professions do not award board certification to those with entry level credentials of degree and license and that board certification (real or faux) would not help general practitioners economically.

However, once dust from ABOP settled, AOA convened a Summit on Board Certification and Continued Competence to form a coalition to reconsider board certification.

Now the justification for board certification was to “ensure general practitioners maintained their competence” although, as this NBEO paper pointed out, board certification is used to verify initial competence of specialists and not continued competence of general practitioners. In addition, only state boards have legal authority to insure competence is maintained and to prescribe re-licensure CME for this purpose.

Despite this NBEO paper, the AOA continued its claim “optometry is the only profession that does not have board certification to ensure continuing competence” and created a Joint Project Team to develop board certification for general practice optometrists.

This Project Team produced the American Board of Optometry (ABO), housed within the AOA St. Louis office and utilizing an AOA multi-million dollar line of credit to offer board certification to general practice optometrists.

The Association of Regulatory Bodies of Optometry, the National Board of Examiners in Optometry, the National Association of VA Optometrists and the Armed Forces Optometric Society have not endorsed ABO and no credentialing committee at a Joint Commission accredited health facility or insurance panel has recognized ABO.

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