Physicians Penalized for Sharing Exam Questions

BY MARY ELLEN SCHNEIDER

The American Board of Internal Medicine has sanctioned 139 physicians for sharing or seeking questions used on the certification exam.

Depending on the extent of the physician's involvement in the scheme, the ABIM has revoked or suspended their board certification. Those who have yet to achieve certification will not be admitted to sit for a certification exam for at least 1 year. The board has filed suit against the five physicians it considers to be the most egregious offenders.

The actions come after an ABIM investigation revealed that an independent test preparation company based in New Jersey, Arora Board Review, was allegedly promoting its review course by telling physicians that they used the actual board exam questions in their materials.

Company officials are also alleged to have asked physicians to report back on the questions used immediately after taking the certification exam. The ABIM filed suit earlier this year against Arora Board Review for copyright infringement and theft of trade secrets.

The home page of the Arora Board Review Web site states that the company has put its business on hold until a settlement can be reached with the ABIM.

The ABIM estimates that hundreds of exam questions were disclosed through this scheme. Those questions have been removed from the exam pool.

All test takers sign a "pledge of honesty" that they will not disclose, copy, or reproduce the exam material. ABIM officials are sending letters to any physicians who took the Arora course, expressing concern that they did not notify the board about the "questionable activities." ■