

# State Medical Boards Consider Relicensing Change

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New York Bureau

Physicians could face increased requirements when renewing their state medical licenses under a draft model policy currently being evaluated by the Federation of State Medical Boards.

Under the draft policy, relicensure would become more comprehensive and require that physicians demonstrate continuing skills and knowledge in their area of practice.

The maintenance of licensure process would closely mirror the requirements that the American Board of Medical Specialties has in place for maintenance of certification.

The draft policy is a model that individual state medical boards could use, but the

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states would determine whether or how it would be implemented.

Over the last 5 years, the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) has been considering just how state medical boards could change these policies

to ensure that physician licensees are competent.

"There is general agreement that current licensing requirements involve mainly activities associated with passive learning," said Dr. Audrey Uknis, professor of medicine at Temple University, Philadelphia, and chair of the continuous professional development committee for the American College of Rheumatology.

But while current relicensure requirements may fall short of demonstrating physician competence to the public, they can still be onerous in terms of their demands on physician time, she said. As a result, if states were to move ahead with increased requirements for relicensure there could be some initial pushback from rheumatologists.

The proposed plan to allow physicians involved in maintenance of certification to use that process to satisfy any new state licensing requirements would help some rheumatologists, Dr. Uknis said. However, there are many rheumatologists who are not engaged in maintenance of certification because of the time and expense involved, or because they hold a lifetime certification from the

American Board of Internal Medicine. Roughly half of the 5,000 rheumatologists who are board certified have lifetime certification, she said.

If even a fraction of those physicians who have lifetime certification chose to retire because of increased licensing requirements, it would have a significant impact on the rheumatology workforce, Dr. Uknis said.

But Dr. Uknis said officials at the ACR will continue to work to ensure that even

rheumatologists who aren't participating in maintenance of certification have a reasonable pathway to relicensure and tools that can help them meet those requirements.

Earlier this year, the organization's House of Delegates approved guiding principles for developing maintenance of licensure and called for additional research on the impact that the new requirements would have on state medical boards and licensed physicians.

Once that research is complete, the draft maintenance of licensure policy would likely be considered by the FSMB House of Delegates at their meeting next May, said Carol Clothier, vice president of strategic planning and physician competency initiatives for the FSMB.

"Nobody wants to create more work for physicians," she said.

The idea is to try to take advantage of activities physicians already are doing to and use those to satisfy state licensure re-



## TALK BACK

If this maintenance of certification issue affects you, will you recertify? Why or why not?

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quirements, she said.

For their part, state medical boards are feeling pressure from the public in light of rapidly changing science and technology.

And the current requirements, which vary but generally include some continuing medical education, don't match up with public expectations, she said.

If the maintenance of licensure policy is accepted by the FSMB House of Delegates, it still would be a model policy only, Ms. Clothier said.

It would be up to individual states and territories to decide if they wanted to adopt, revise, or ignore the model policy. And that decision and its timing is likely to vary widely based on the politics involved in each state, she added. ■

## F Y I

### Lupus Clinical Trials Resource

The Lupus Foundation of America's Center for Clinical Trials Education is a resource to learn about and join lupus clinical trials. The Center's Web site has extensive information about clinical trials and participation in them, as well as a trial-locating service. The Center offers community education programs on clinical research offered through the Foundation's chapters. For more information, log on to the Web site at [www.lupus.org/clinicaltrials](http://www.lupus.org/clinicaltrials).

### Quality Reporting Portal

A new self-service look-up tool on the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative portal allows eligible professionals at the Tax Identification Number level to see if their 2007 PQRI Feedback Report is available. If it is, physicians can register for an account in order to view the report. Visit the Web site online at [www.qualitynet.org/pqri](http://www.qualitynet.org/pqri). Eligible professionals also can call the QualityNet Help Desk at 866-288-8912 to learn if their feedback report is available.

### Postmarket Drug Safety Information

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has created a Web page with a wide variety of safety information about prescription drugs for health care professionals and consumers. The Web page, [www.fda.gov/cder/drugsafety.htm](http://www.fda.gov/cder/drugsafety.htm), includes links to information in these categories: drug labeling, professional labeling, and patient package inserts; drugs that have Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS); and press announcements and safety sheets with the latest risk information.

### Disability Etiquette Booklet

The United Spinal Association has published a booklet, "Disability Etiquette," covering basic principles of interaction that apply to most people with disabilities as well as detailed information on mobility and sensory impairments, developmental and psychiatric disabilities, Tourette's syndrome, HIV/AIDS, learning disabilities, and others. To download the free 36-page illustrated booklet, go to the United Spinal Association's Web site at [www.unitedspinal.org/publications](http://www.unitedspinal.org/publications).

### E-Prescribing Incentive Web Site

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has a new E-Prescribing Incentive Program section page, which gives information about the program. The web site has links to a fact sheet as well as to related information on the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative. Visit the page at [www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI/03\\_EPrescribingIncentiveProgram.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/PQRI/03_EPrescribingIncentiveProgram.asp#TopOfPage).

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