

Certification in Sleep Medicine

To the Editor:

A recent editorial in *ANESTHESIOLOGY*, "Sleep Medicine and Anesthesia: A New Horizon for Anesthesiologists," discussed the role anesthesiologists can play along with physicians from other specialties in the care of patients with sleep disorders.¹ In addition, it noted the establishment of the Society of Anesthesia and Sleep Medicine, which is designed to promote discussion, education, development of clinical standards, and research related to issues common to anesthesia and sleep. The American Board of Anesthesiology (ABA) wants anesthesiologists to be aware that the American Board of Medical Specialties has recently (March 2011) approved an application from the ABA to join other boards in the sponsorship of subspecialty certification in sleep medicine.

The Sleep Medicine Certification Program was developed jointly a few years ago by the American Boards of Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Otolaryngology, Pediatrics, and Psychiatry and Neurology. It is designed to recognize excellence among physicians who are specialists in the care of patients with sleep problems and specific sleep disorders. With the acceptance of the ABA's request, anesthesiologists may now join graduates of residency programs from other specialties in being able to enter fellowship programs in sleep medicine that are approved by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. In addition, qualified anesthesiologists now will be authorized to take the examination that can lead to certification by the ABA in the subspecialty of sleep medicine.

Anesthesiologists interested in obtaining subspecialty certification in sleep medicine must be diplomates of the ABA and participants in the ABA's Maintenance of Certification program in Anesthesiology; they also are required to have completed successfully an Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education-approved sleep medicine fellowship to qualify for the subspecialty examination in sleep medicine. Applicants who completed training in anesthesiology before July 1, 2009, are eligible to apply for the sleep medicine examination without fellowship training if they have been certified by the American Board of Sleep Medicine or can provide attestation of significant practice experience in sleep medicine.

* <http://www.theABA.org>. Accessed May 9, 2011.

The Sleep Medicine Certification Examination is a comprehensive, 1-day, computer-based examination. It is administered by the American Board of Internal Medicine to candidates from all eligible specialties. The next examination will be given November 10, 2011, but the application cycle for this examination ended June 1, 2011. The subsequent examination will be administered in 2013 and will be the final one in which anesthesiologists can qualify with practice criteria alone. Additional information is available on the ABA Web site* or by calling the ABA office at 866-999-7501.

David L. Brown, M.D.,† **Mark A. Rockoff, M.D.** †The American Board of Anesthesiology, Inc., Raleigh, North Carolina. browndl@ccf.org

Reference

1. Chung F, Hillman D, Lydic R: Sleep medicine and anesthesia: A new horizon for anesthesiologists. *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 2011; 114:1261-2

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In Reply:

We welcome the important development in training opportunities for anesthesiologists in sleep medicine referred to in the letter of Brown *et al.* that was written about our freestanding Editorial View.¹ This visionary step recognizes the growing importance of knowledge of sleep and its disorders to anesthesiology, not only in terms of clinical practice but also in understanding the nature of anesthesia-induced unconsciousness itself. These are the concerns of the nascent Society of Anesthesia and Sleep Medicine,‡ which will help support these activities. Given the relevance of sleep biology and sleep medicine to anesthesiology, we hope that many anesthesiologists will take an active interest in this area and some will choose to specialize in it.

Frances Chung, M.B.B.S.,† **David Hillman, M.B.B.S.,** **Ralph Lydic, Ph.D.** †University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. frances.chung@uhn.on.ca

Reference

1. Chung F, Hillman D, Lydic R: Sleep medicine and anesthesia: A new horizon for anesthesiologists. *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 2011; 114:1261-2

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‡ www.anesthesiaandsleep.org. Accessed May 18, 2011.