

Implant Dentistry: The American Board of Dental Specialties Provides a Better Way for Specialty Recognition

Many of us who practice implant dentistry have received Diplomate status from the American Board of Oral Implantology/Implant Dentistry (ABOI/ID). The ABOI/ID is a specialty board recognized by the American Board of Dental Specialties (ABDS). Other specialties boards recognized by the ABDS include: the American Board of Oral Medicine, the American Board of Orofacial Pain, and the American Dental Board of Anesthesiology.¹ The ABDS Board of Directors is made up of representatives from the four member boards that comprise the ABDS.

The ABDS recognition of dental specialties is more in line with the specialty recognition process performed by our colleagues in medicine. The American Medical Association (AMA) does not determine which specialties are recognized, but rather the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) determines specialties in medicine. The ABMS is comprised of 24 medical specialty boards that offer certification in more than 130 specialties and subspecialties. Representatives from the 24 member boards comprise the ABMS. The ABMS mission is, "To serve the public and the medical profession by improving the quality of health care through setting professional standards for lifelong certification in partnership with Member Boards."²

As medicine and dentistry become more sophisticated in disease diagnosis, treatment options/planning, and delivery, patients' expectations of a dentist's clinician proficiency are escalated. Today more than 75% of the physicians are Diplomates of their respective certifying boards.³ The concept of Medical specialization recognition came about as the result of a 1908 presentation by Dr Derrick T. Vail, Sr to the American Academy of Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology.⁴ Dr Vail suggested that the public would be better served if specialists had defined sets of knowledge that had been tested and demonstrated before an appropriate examining board.

The ABDS's mission is, "To encourage the further development of the profession of Dentistry through independent recognition of specialty certifying boards, improve the quality of care, and ultimately protect the public."⁵ The ABDS was created on the belief that an autonomous organization is

required for the objective evaluation and determination of specialty areas in dentistry. Therefore, the ABDS provides a nondiscriminatory, equitable, and evidence-based process for assessing and recognizing dental certifying boards, their certification requirements, and their respective areas of practice as specialty areas in dentistry. The ABDS provides an unbiased method for state dental boards to recognize dental specialists.

The time has come for the ABDS, albeit 100 years later. The leaders and members of the individual member organizations have sacrificed time, expertise, and treasury to make this critical advancement possible. The American Dental Association (ADA) Resolution 65 acknowledges that advertising of non-ADA specialties is not unethical and therefore Diplomates of the ABOI/ID should be able to advertise their specialty status. It is still uncertain which dental state boards, if any, will challenge this specialty recognition.

The end result of the efforts of so many will be "improved patient care," and that is what we all desire. The ABOI/ID Diplomates want to be play a significant role in achieving "improved care for patients" by helping set and maintain the professional standards for patient care.

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