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ABNM Launches CertLink Longitudinal Assessment Program

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One of the main purposes of the American Board of Nuclear Medicine (ABNM) is the advancement of the health of the public through establishment and maintenance of standards of training and education, and the qualification of physicians rendering nuclear medicine services to the people of the United States. The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), with its certification and maintenance of certification (MOC) programs, also helps make certain the public has confidence that they are receiving high-quality medical care from physicians who are well trained and knowledgeable in the latest advances, research, and technologies in their chosen specialty.

In January 2018, the ABNM embarked on a soft launch of our new longitudinal assessment pilot: CertLink™, developed for the ABMS Member Boards. Based on adult learning theory, CertLink's questions and explanations provide repeated exposure to relevant information as a way to test and expand knowledge. The process helps individuals fill knowledge gaps and demonstrate proficiency. The questions are image rich and high quality, with practice-relevant content. The pilot, which periodically delivers nuclear medicine questions with detailed explanations and references directly to enrolled ABNM Diplomates, is being evaluated as an alternative to the MOC examination required of ABNM time-limited certificate holders every 10 years. It is useful for lifetime certificate holders to keep current and test their knowledge. ABNM Diplomates who are enrolled in CertLink also have agreed to participate in surveys that ABMS administers. ABNM, by participating, hopes to gain valuable insight into how our Diplomates learn and on which platform they prefer to be tested. ABNM would like to find out what works and what does not work for individuals as well as get tips and insight from our participants in all aspects of the program, including relevance of the questions to their practice of nuclear medicine, the quality of images, and the testing platform and environment.

The CertLink soft launch currently involves the participation of 185 diplomates. We receive regular updates from ABMS about our participation and questions that have been answered. As of January 22, 110 Diplomates had logged into CertLink with 382 questions answered. Diplomates had options in answering the 4 required questions for January.

They could space these out or answer all at once. A total of 95 Diplomates (51%) had answered all 4 questions by January 22. Diplomates will continue to receive 4 questions each month until the end of March, when the soft launch ends. In April 2018, ABNM will fully launch CertLink and continue the pilot for 4 years. All Diplomates with unexpired, time-limited certificates (expiring in 2018 or later) or with lifetime certificates are eligible to participate if they have not been subject to any ABNM disciplinary actions (probation, suspension, or revocation of certification) in the past 10 years.

All participants in the soft launch have been sent a baseline survey from ABMS to collect information to obtain a basic understanding of Diplomates' overall Internet and device usage, preferred learning methods and resources, volunteer engagement, and practice area information. The Baseline Survey's goal was to provide support for the continuous improvement of the CertLink user interface and experience. The data have been carefully reviewed by ABNM and ABMS, and the overall results show that Diplomates prefer to utilize technology/devices for CertLink with which they consider themselves to be extremely comfortable and also showed high usage of Internet resources to stay current. Those participating are highly engaged, use a broad array of medical resources to obtain their nuclear medicine knowledge, and are encouraged by the alternative CertLink will provide to the traditional secure exam. When CertLink participants have had questions about process, content, or other aspects of program, these have been answered quickly.

Interested Diplomates may enroll in CertLink by visiting the CertLink homepage at <https://www.abnm.org/index.php/certlinktm/>. Additional information regarding ABNM's CertLink program can be found on the Frequently Asked Questions page on the ABNM website at <https://www.abnm.org/index.php/certlink-faqs/>.