

CMS Approves Payment Incentive for ABNM's MOC Program

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The ABNM is one of five American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) boards whose MOC program has been accepted by CMS for a 0.5% incentive payment for diplomates who participate in its MOC program. In order to qualify for the CMS incentive, physicians must also be participating in CMS' PQRS program (1% incentive payment for 2011) as well as participating in the ABNM's MOC program "more frequently" than is required. For lifetime certificate diplomates, the "more frequently" requirement is met simply if they are participating in MOC since they are not required to do so. For diplomates with time-limited certificates, "more frequently" has been defined as earning 30 category one CME credits each year instead of the required 25, taking the MOC exam every nine years instead of every 10 years and completing four practice performance assessment projects every 10 years instead of three every 10 years. The ABMS is working with a vendor (CECity) on software that will facilitate diplomate data submission to CMS. The charge from the software vendor is expected to be about \$100 per diplomate per year. For many physicians, the CMS bonus is expected to be \$500 or more per year. The size of the bonus will vary considerably from physician to physician since it depends on the volume of patients and the patient mix. The ABNM expects to have more information about how its diplomates can participate in this program soon and will be publishing an FAQ on this subject in the next few weeks.

The fact that the ABNM is now having direct conversations with CMS has important implications for the role of boards in healthcare reform. CMS is asking the ABNM and the nuclear medicine community to come up with valid measures of quality in nuclear medicine. Our healthcare delivery systems cannot be improved without having valid measurements to see whether or not an intervention has resulted in improved health care. Obvious areas for improvement include minimizing radiation doses, improving the quality of our reports and improving the accuracy of our interpretations. The long-term goal is to provide physicians with feedback so that they can see how their performance compares to the performance of their peers. The ABNM believes that any changes to our health system that rewards quality will greatly benefit our diplomates since we are confident that ABNM certified physicians provide the highest quality nuclear medicine services. Although progress in this area is likely to be quite slow, physicians should see several new nuclear medicine quality measures over the next few years.



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