



Board Certification Credentials

Board certification in the various specialties of dentistry and medicine is a method of credentialing specialists by examination and peer evaluation. It signifies qualification and achievement beyond formal training in an academic institution or clinical teaching program. Specialty certification defines the specialty. Without it, the specialty does not exist.

The certification process is the last step in defining the specialty, as the board recognizes a group of individuals who meet or exceed the examination expectations. This process, in concert with the specialty's parameters of care document, CDEL definition, and specific officially recognized education standards, clearly outlines that definition. The certification process validates the specialty as a whole as providing high-level, specialized patient care. As the number of certified prosthodontists grows, public recognition of the specialty as setting the standard for care grows. For a clinician, certification is earned recognition by peers who affirm the individual meets the knowledge, skill, and professionalism of a specialist.

Traditionally, specialty board certification has been a prerequisite for obtaining staff privileges in hospitals and clinics. While this may not impact the private practitioner, anyone considering an institutional appointment should be aware that this prerequisite exists in most institutions. Additionally, some states require board certification or a state dental board specialty license in order for the practitioner to be listed as a specialist. In the military services, a specialist receives increased salary (called "board-certified pay") when board certification has been achieved. This financial incentive correlates with the high rate of board certification seen in the armed services. Similarly, board certification is used as a factor in promotion and tenure reviews by many professional schools.

For the private practitioner of prosthodontics, the incentive to become board-certified is a more personal decision. For many, the value is very real. Currently, 50% of all board-certified prosthodontists are in private practice. The pride of accomplishment and the ability to call oneself a Diplomate of the American Board of Prosthodontics (ABP) and a Fellow of the American College of Prosthodontists (ACP) is incentive enough for many. However, the benefits go beyond personal accomplishment.

Distinguishing oneself within the private practice community may carry considerable tangible benefits as well. The consumer public is becoming more aware of the importance of board certification, and the frequency of inquiries regarding certification in prosthodontics has increased dramatically over the past decade. Potential patients contact the ABP regularly to determine whether the prosthodontist they are considering as their care provider is board-certified. Patients also seek board-certified prosthodontists in



their geographic region and are often willing to travel substantial distances to be seen by a Diplomate. This trend of increased awareness on the part of the public will likely grow in the future.

The Board of Directors of the ACP is very aware that a strong specialty board and a high rate of certification among its members are critical to maintaining specialty status. The need for a high rate of certification will become more critical in the future to support the specialty and ensure a high level of patient care for the public. For these reasons, the ACP Board of Directors strongly supports the position that board certification in prosthodontics is critical to the future growth and well-being of the specialty and encourages its members to actively pursue board certification.

References

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