



American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, Inc.

A Member Board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS)

Public Advisory Forum

2024



2024 ABPN Public Advisory Forum

The American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) hosted a Public Advisory Forum at the ABPN office in Deerfield, IL, on April 21, 2024. The goal was to hold open dialogue with several public constituencies, which focused on how the ABPN can better serve patients, families, and the public in keeping with its mission.

The Forum was chaired by ABPN leaders Dr. Jeffrey Lyness, President and CEO, Board Chair Dr. Steven Lewis, and Board Vice Chair Dr. Christopher Thomas. The attendees were ABPN directors, ABPN senior staff, and public attendees including representatives from patient/family advocacy organizations

The Forum agenda included speakers, a panel presentation, and small group discussions. Speakers discussed the purpose behind specialty board certification and continuing certification, the mission of the ABPN, and the ABPN's challenges and goal priorities.

Overview of ABPN Mission and Activities

ABPN leaders Drs. Jeffrey Lyness, President and CEO, Steven Lewis, Board Chair, and Christopher Thomas, Board Vice Chair, kicked off the public advisory forum by discussing ABPN's role and mission, the meaning of specialty board certification, and the challenges facing ABPN.

Dr. Lewis explained that board certification recognizes expertise in a specialty or subspecialty and requires defining what it means to be an expert in the field and conducting independent assessments. Board certification is intended to serve the profession by credibly reassuring patients, families, and the public.

Certification is distinct from possessing a medical degree or medical licensure, Dr. Lewis said, neither of which recognize specialty expertise. Specialty certification is obtained after a physician completes residency training.

Dr. Lewis went on to note that many other organizations are involved in the regulation of physician education and practice. The Liaison Committee on Medical Education accredits medical schools, and the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education accredits residency and fellowship programs. The Federation of State Medical Boards comprises the state- and territory-level medical boards that provide medical licensure. Hospitals and health systems credential physician practice privileges.

The ABPN's mission, certifying physician expertise in three primary specialties and 11 subspecialties, includes promoting education and professionalism. However, the ABPN is not an education organization, Dr. Lewis said; education and professional development activities are provided by hospitals and health systems, academic institutions, and the professional societies.

The people of the ABPN include the board of directors, consisting of 16 neurologist and psychiatrist directors, and 28 specialty and subspecialty exam-writing committees. More than 300 volunteer physicians serve on the exam committees, Dr. Lewis said. He also reviewed the considerable training and other eligibility requirements for a physician to take an ABPN secure, proctored written board examination.

Dr. Thomas discussed how the ABPN is focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The ABPN's DEI action plan, led by a board-level committee, includes many activities that have been completed and others in progress. The action plan items span the ABPN's people and workplace culture, its products and services (i.e., certification including continuing certification), and its partnerships with various external constituents.

Another high priority for the ABPN is communications with such constituents, including diplomates, trainees, the public, and professional societies, Dr. Thomas added. As an important example, Dr. Thomas described the fundamental principle that continuing certification must include lifelong learning informed by feedback. Extrinsic feedback is necessary because of the limitations of self-assessment in recognizing one's own deficits. Also, the role of certification boards requires independent assessments. Even individuals who successfully maintain their skills on their own should be involved in the profession's self-regulation to help identify and support those who need help, he said.



Dr. Lyness concluded the opening session by discussing challenges and opportunities for the ABPN. Some physicians have expressed concerns about the requirements for continuing certification. He noted that the ABPN's continuing certification program has evolved over time to allow more flexibility and credit for lifelong learning activities that most physicians in practice are already doing.

Dr. Lyness noted that the ABPN has never advocated for board certification as a requirement for state medical licensure or that it be used as a credentialing requirement for any institutions or programs other than for faculty and program directors in ACGME-accredited or ABPN-approved training programs. However, the ABPN does believe that the medical staff of clinical institutions should be free to set their own credentialing requirements.

The ABPN board is working on a refresh of the ABPN strategic plan, which will be largely completed by the end of 2024. Dr. Lyness said that this work will likely lead to new or expanded initiatives for the organization. The topics under consideration for future activities include: the role of competency-based medical education in training; the potential uses of artificial intelligence and other computer technologies in the ABPN's work; promoting positive aspects of professionalism as part of lifelong learning; and professional development activities that help improve the quality of health care.

Panel Discussion: “This is what I/my constituents are passionate about.”

Stephanie J. Monroe, JD, Vice President and Senior Advisor of Health Equity and Access at UsAgainstAlzheimer’s, a national advocacy organization in Washington, D.C.

Lisa Goodwin, MBA, CPCS, CPMSM, Director, Medical Staff Services at the National Association of Medical Staff Services (NAMSS)



At UsAgainstAlzheimer’s, Ms. Monroe works on prevention, early detection and diagnosis, and access to treatments for Alzheimer’s Disease. The organization partners with the government, scientists, the private sector, and organizations to give a voice to Alzheimer’s patients and caregivers. She noted that her organization focuses on inequities and barriers in accessing care and diagnoses and to raise awareness of Alzheimer’s within the African American community. Monroe noted that studies show the risk for Alzheimer’s is disproportionately high for African Americans, which needs to be taken into account in the development and execution of clinical trials.

“We are working to get safe and effective treatments into the hands of people who need them most,” Monroe says. “We are working to ensure Alzheimer’s patients are treated fairly as the federal government considers drug approval and Medicare coverage for treatments.”



Ms. Goodwin, whose organization includes more than 6,000 medical staff and credentialing services professionals from medical group practices, hospitals, and managed care organizations, said that lifelong learning enhances the professional development of her members. She also noted that the NAMSS supports the process of continuing certification programs for physicians. Demonstrating ongoing physician competence is an essential piece of maintaining patient safety and is an important part of evaluating practitioners for credentialing and privileging decisions, Ms. Goodwin commented.

“Ongoing education – we hold this as the highest standard,” Ms. Goodwin said. “We are committed to making the processes as efficient as possible.”

The panel concluded with discussion from the whole group covering both the psychiatric and neurologic needs of underserved populations and the importance of diplomates valuing the certification status they have earned.

Small Group Discussions: How can the ABPN better serve patients, families, and the public in keeping with its mission?

During the forum, participants broke into two small groups facilitated by ABPN directors. The small groups had an hour-long discussion on the above question. The groups reported back to the whole group with the following ideas, recognizing that some of these are directly relevant to the ABPN's mission, while others might be best accomplished through the activities of other organizations in the fields.

Patients and Families

Ensure the highest quality care for patients

Focus on patients' goals, values, and wishes, and include this in our assessments

Assess communications skills

- Building alliances with patients and families
- Shared decision-making
- Working with people from diverse populations

Disseminate / assess community resources and available support networks for patients and families

Transparently share information about what ABPN is doing to ensure that patients receive the highest quality care:

- Initial and continuing certification, including ABCC articles
- The value of certification
- ABPN awards programs
- Crucial Issues Forums

Disseminate knowledge about

- Research on diseases
- Interdisciplinary patient care

Partner with patient care registries and other activities of professional societies

Expedite access to clinical trials and newer treatments

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Public and Partnerships

Develop relationships with allied organizations, work with them to:

- Advocate for the needs of patients and the public
- Educate about the importance of quality care and the value of certification
- Create outreach programs to recruit medical students into our fields
- Increase research support
- Educate physicians and the public on how to best access the appropriate specialists

Identify additional public constituencies

- Local community organizations and social groups
- Other (non-physician) clinicians and healthcare professionals



Summary/Next Steps



The Forum concluded with a whole-group discussion moderated by Drs. Lewis and Lyness, along with Dr. Nina Schor (who subsequently became ABPN Board Chair in July 2024). Considering the range of ideas raised throughout the Forum, it was noted that some are directly in the ABPN’s purview, while others are beyond ABPN’s mission or capacity to implement. This led to discussion about the ABPN’s relationships with other constituencies including the professional societies in psychiatry and neurology.

“Maybe the role of the ABPN is to be the encourager of our partners for things that are out of our scope,” Dr. Schor said. She also noted that the role of the Forum, and future communications with public constituencies, is and should be, “not just about educating the public, but to be educated by the public about what is important.”



Dr. Lyness said the Forum provided an opportunity for the ABPN to include constituents’ perspectives in ongoing conversations about how the organization can better serve patients and the public. Inviting public constituents to future activities, such as Crucial Issues Forums, would leverage the ABPN’s abilities “as a convener and influencer,” Dr. Lyness said. “This Forum is giving us renewed energy.”

Public Advisory Forum Attendees

Iqbal “Ike” Ahmed, MD
American Board of Psychiatry
and Neurology

Imran Ali, MD
American Board of Psychiatry
and Neurology

Erika Augustine, MD
American Board of Psychiatry
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Mr. Ronald Bartek
Friedreich’s Ataxia Research
Alliance (FARA)

Sheldon Benjamin, MD
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Robert Boland, MD
American Board of Psychiatry
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Amy Brooks-Kayal, MD
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Ms. Robin Callen
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Joseph Cheong, MD
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Sandra DeJong, MD
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Lisa Goodwin, MBA
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David Henderson, MD
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Steven Lewis, MD
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Jeffrey Lyness, MD
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Stephanie Monroe, JD
UsAgainstAlzheimer’s

Ms. Amy Ohmer
Naturally Sweet Sisters

Mr. Michael Pollock
Depression and Bipolar Disorder
Support Alliance

Ms. Nikki Rashes
National Alliance on Mental
Illness (NAMI)

Nina Schor, MD, PhD
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David Shin, PhD
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Neil Thakur, PhD
ALS Association

Christopher Thomas, MD
American Board of Psychiatry
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Ms. Patti Vondrak
American Board of Psychiatry
and Neurology



Our Mission

The mission of the ABPN is to promote and assess the competence of psychiatrists and neurologists to provide high quality care in an equitable and inclusive manner to diverse populations by:

- Establishing standards and requirements for initial and continuing certification;
- Implementing state-of-the-art testing methods to evaluate candidate and diplomate competencies;
- Encouraging and assessing diplomate involvement in lifelong learning;
- Applying available technologies and information to collect and analyze pertinent data;
- Communicating and collaborating with training programs, residents, candidates, diplomates, professional and health care organizations, and the public;
- Supporting innovative educational and research programs relevant to psychiatrists and neurologists;
- Operating programs and services effectively and efficiently; and
- Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all programs and services.

Statement on Professionalism

Professionalism forms the basis of medicine's contract with society. The ABPN is concerned with those aspects of professionalism that are demonstrated through a physician's clinical competence, commitment to lifelong learning and professional improvement, interpersonal skills, and ethical understanding and behavior. In its credentialing, certification, and CC programs, the ABPN seeks to assess and document that its candidates and diplomates possess and maintain these aspects of



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