



## Spotlight On Benn E. Smith, MD, Scottsdale, AZ

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**Dr. Smith** is Associate Professor of Neurology at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science, Scottsdale, Arizona.

### **Why did you want to join the ABPN Board?**

After having been associated with ABPN through the taking of the initial certification exam after Neurology training, I was left with the impression that ‘This is an efficient organization!’ and ‘My mind can relax because these people are careful, responsive and caring.’ Later when a colleague asked if I would consider participating in a question writing committee, I was intrigued to have the opportunity to be part of the certification process and be allowed to see even closer up ‘behind the curtain’ of ABPN and its workings. After many years of doing question writing and meeting many dedicated colleagues doing the same, as well as a number of sitting board members, the thought occurred to me, ‘I wonder how someone expresses interest in joining the Board.’ The process was explained, I applied and the next year I was notified of being selected to serve on the ABPN Board. That was 2 years ago now – which has afforded an even more up close and personal involvement with this stellar organization.



### **What do you want to achieve with the ABPN Board?**

My primary objective with the Board is to contribute to maintaining psychiatry and neurology as respected and credible professions by making the certification processes excellent at all levels. In my view this strives to serve and protect patients, the medical profession, and psychiatry/neurology diplomates with vigilance, integrity and transparency.

### **What is the most important thing people should understand about the Board?**

For me, the most striking realization on joining the Board, was the observation that my fellow members are just like me! They are busy medical professionals caring for patients, busily involved in their practices and institutions, often with strong participation in education and research, and committed to excellence in all that they do. It has been reassuring and comforting to realize that the ABPN board members making decisions about certification and related matters are ‘in the trenches’ professionals who can relate to those who are in training, those preparing to take an initial certification exam and those aspiring to be excellent practitioners by maintaining certification through CC.

### **Why is the patient perspective important to you and how does that connect to your work on the board?**

It can be daunting and sometimes frightening to face a psychiatric or neurologic diagnosis as a patient. Knowing that ABPN Board members diagnose, see and care for many patients themselves,

and eventually often deal with medical problems either they or their loved ones face, keeps the patient perspective at the forefront of all of our deliberations and decision making. I think most patients would be comforted by this observation.

**Did you have a mentor that affected your career journey?**

Dr. Terry Cascino was one of the first neurology faculty I met during residency training at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. He was always enthusiastic, clinically excellent, and kind with patients, families, colleagues and trainees. When I learned that he was involved heavily with ABPN, and then experienced his guidance through the committee process and finally applying myself to join the Board, I hoped that in some small way I could emulate his contributions to the profession. Whenever we are considering a policy direction or small change in how processes might be improved at the ABPN Board level, I find myself thinking ‘What would Dr. Cascino do in this situation?’ In the course of my term on the Board, my hope is to, in at least some small way, carry on his memorable legacy of service.

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