



# ABMS Maintenance of Certification

## One Specialist's Story

### Mary Jo Welker, MD Diplomate, American Board of Family Medicine

*“Something like Maintenance of Certification needed to happen so that we can show we are in fact doing the right things for our patients according to the guidelines and standards of care set by the profession.”*

Dr. Welker and her entire faculty of 50 family medicine physicians are all actively engaged in the American Board of Family Medicine's Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program. Since theirs is an academic medical center, they view participation as a rite of practice. “It is important to make sure that physicians are practicing according to the most recent evidence-based advancements in medicine,” explained Dr. Welker. “We understand this process helps us function the way the public wants us to and helps our board show that we really are keeping up with the things that are changing in medicine.”

As a 30 year practitioner, Dr. Welker participated in the previous system of recertification. She explained that the process only involved completion of 300 hours of continuing medical education every seven years. A doctor's professionalism or quality of practice were not really looked at. Now in her fifth year of the ten-year MOC cycle, Dr. Welker says one of the goals for MOC within her practice is to make sure physicians are educated and up-to-date on the most recent practices in those areas that are most common to Family Medicine, such as diabetes, hypertension, congestive heart failure, depression, back pain and others.

“It does involve some change in practice,” said Dr. Welker. “If you don't change anything in your practice, then the whole process has not gained you anything.” Physicians from her faculty who thought they were practicing great medicine and did things right all the time had their eyes opened when they didn't meet the criteria of their self-assessment audit. After devoting more attention to particular weak areas and seeing improvement, the physicians feel that they have accomplished a goal. “When you know you are changing for the better and have objective evidence that you are doing so, you feel proud,” added Welker.

Dr. Welker thinks MOC is going in the right direction. “Family Medicine made a first step by eliminating lifetime certification. No one deserves to have a lifetime certification. Physicians really do need to be retested.”

*Dr. Welker holds general board certification in Family Medicine from the American Board of Family Medicine. She has been in practice for 30 years and is currently Chair, Department of Family Medicine at the Ohio State University. Dr. Welker earned her medical degree from the Ohio State University College of Medicine.*



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