



## ABPS Newsletter to Diplomates

April 2020

In the Public Trust

*"The mission of The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc. is to promote safe, ethical, efficacious plastic surgery to the public by maintaining high standards for the education, examination, certification and continuous certification of plastic surgeons as specialists and subspecialists."*

Included in this Newsletter is the Board's appreciation for our diplomates who support the Board in its mission, examination updates and statistics and contact information for the Board Office - your input is welcome!



### Report from the Chair Paul S. Cederna, M.D.

I have been humbled and honored to serve as Chair of the American Board of Plastic Surgery for the past year. It has been one of the most gratifying positions of my professional career. The ABPS has a long and rich history of promoting safe, ethical, and efficacious plastic surgery through the highest quality education, certification and lifelong learning of plastic surgeons. All of the previous Chairs of the ABPS and the Directors of the Board have worked diligently to create the programs we currently have in place to achieve our mission. However, I believe it is always possible to improve. The world around us is not standing still. In fact, the only thing that is certain is that change is inevitable and as a result, adaptation is crucial for success. That is why this past year has been characterized by change. It has been an opportunity for us to adapt to the changing clinical environments, training requirements, and goals for lifelong learning of our Diplomates. Ultimately, we are striving to train the finest physicians and surgeons who will practice with the highest moral and ethical standards and to help our ABPS certified plastic surgeons continue to improve and elevate their level of performance for decades to come. It is a lofty goal, but certainly one that is achievable.

### Continuous Certification Program

This past year the Board has worked diligently to improve our Continuous Certification Program. In the past, Board requirements seemed like a hurdle to overcome to maintain ABPS certification. Intermittently, our Diplomates were asked to complete a task or submit a case list. At the end of the 10 year cycle, an exam was administered at a commercial testing center. The results of the exam determined whether someone remained board certified. However, this did not really accomplish the goals of the Board. Requiring a group of practicing plastic surgeons to set aside a large amount of time to study (or in many cases "cram") for an exam simply did not help us achieve our goals. In fact, what we really wanted to achieve was that our Diplomates would continue to learn, advance their skills, and improve the quality of care they provide for their patients. We have all "crammed" for exams in high school, college, and medical school. Although we may have been successful in organic chemistry studying in this way, the stakes are much too high to rely on cramming, to gain new information and knowledge in plastic surgery

needed to provide care for our patients.

This is a time to continuously learn from clinical and basic science research, learn new techniques from the experts, and gain new knowledge and treatment approaches for new medical conditions (i.e. VTE, BIA-ALCL). It is the time for us to stay current so we are always providing the finest care possible. To this end, the Continuous Certification Program continues to develop and evolve to help all of our Diplomates learn every single day. In April 2019, the ABPS administered the first annual knowledge self-assessment with 30 questions. Our Diplomates were given the entire month of April to answer the questions. Since the self-assessment was online, Diplomates could complete the process from any location; no testing sites were required. This gave people the opportunity to answer the questions from home, work, a sailboat (if they have an internet connection), or from the ski lodge. This new self-assessment is different in that the rationale for the correct answer and additional learning resources are included with each question. Each of you who participated last year answered a question, were given the rationale for the correct answer, and then were given a chance to answer the question a second time (if the first answer was incorrect). Your ultimate score was based on your 2nd answer. If there were any knowledge gaps identified, based on the first answer, then clone questions were administered in August to reinforce learning in areas where there was a knowledge gap. Ultimately, the goal is life-long learning and linking our Diplomates with the richest and most current educational resources available through our plastic surgery societies and journals. Thank you to Debra J. Johnson, M.D., and the entire Continuous Certification Committee for tirelessly working to make Continuous Certification more meaningful and helpful. The Self-Assessment Activity opened again on April 1, 2020.

### **Oral Examination**

It was another big year for the Oral Exam under the leadership of David H. Song, M.D., and the Oral Exam Committee. It was not that long ago those candidates were bringing their blue books (with one large rubber band) to Arizona to be reviewed by the examiners. On Thursday night, a determination was made as to whether the candidate could take the exam or not. Unfortunately, some people were sent home from Phoenix without even taking the exam. This does not happen anymore. The Oral Exam case books are electronically submitted and reviewed well ahead of the exam date. This allows the examiners to vet all of the case books to ensure a fair and equitable process. This has been a very significant effort and important advance for the ABPS. This year, the exam has also become entirely paperless. The examiners used their laptops to prepare and administer the oral exam, the candidates reviewed the cases on tablets, and the examiners scored the exams on their laptops electronically. It was not that long ago when everything was done on paper. This transition to a paperless Oral Exam required an immense amount of work but was definitely worth it.

### **Leave of Absence during Plastic Surgery Residency Training**

This year, we have focused our energy on physician wellness and began a process of creating new policies to reduce burnout and improve our flexibility during training to support the individual needs of our future colleagues and Diplomates. We established a Leave of Absence Task Force, under the leadership of Michael W. Neumeister, M.D. to develop new policies to allow plastic surgery residents to take time off from training to promote wellness and reduce burnout. The Leave of Absence Task Force spent a substantial amount of time working on this challenging but very important issue. The result of their work is a new [ABPS Personal Leave Policy](#). Plastic surgery trainees will now be given up to 12 weeks of personal leave, during their 6-year plastic surgery training that can be used for any legitimate reason, at any time, as long as it is approved by their residency program director and the Board. This policy is designed to support our trainees during times of need, to ensure that they remain healthy physically and mentally. The time can be taken for; personal illness, the illness of a loved one, any tragedy that could impact

the emotional well-being of a resident, maternity leave, paternity leave, or any other legitimate reason. The Board is very happy to have this new policy and believe it will significantly reduce stress and allow a break from clinical responsibilities during times of need. It will also reduce the incidence of people having to extend their training and miss the start of their fellowships. Overall, it will be a very good thing for our future Diplomates and professional colleagues. I am very pleased that we have been able to create this new policy and believe it will have a positive impact on all of our trainees.

### **Advisory Council Members**

The Board has also worked hard this year to establish a more meaningful and productive Advisory Council (AC). The AC is a group of subject matter experts who were organized in 2000 to support the development of the Recertification program and to communicate changes within the Board to society leadership. Since that time, its role has become less defined. Under the leadership of Joan E. Lipa, M.D., and the Advisory Council Task Force, we have more clearly defined the roles for the AC and more clearly defined the process by which future Directors of the Board are selected. Going forward, each Sponsoring Organization of the Board (i.e. ASPS, PSRC, ASPN, ect...) will nominate up to 3 people to become AC members. The new members of the AC will be selected from these nominees based on performance, subject area expertise, and contributions to organized plastic surgery. The AC will play a more active role in Board activities and will be given more responsibilities to help develop and implement programmatic initiatives or enhance existing programs. Each year, the new Directors of the Board will be selected from people who have served at least 1 year on the AC and 3 years as an oral examiner. Performance evaluations will be used to select the new Directors of the Board. This will codify a more robust process of selecting the new Directors of the Board and will also provide a more active group of AC members to help push new initiatives forward.

### **Sincere Gratitude and Thanks**

I want to personally thank our entire team in the Board Office in Philadelphia for their commitment to excellence in all things including Gwen A. Hanuscin, Melissa M. Hill, Maria K. D'Angelo, Stephanie L. Kash, and Sarah S. Praul. We couldn't do it without them. Melissa A. Karch has been absolutely outstanding in her role as the Executive Administrator of the American Board of Plastic Surgery. We could not have a more dedicated and committed person than Melissa in this role. Thank you. Lastly, I want to thank Keith E. Brandt, M.D. for another incredible year as our Executive Director. Keith is tireless in his work on behalf of the ABPS. He is dedicated and driven to always do what is best for our Diplomates and our beloved specialty of plastic surgery.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve all of you as the Chair of the ABPS. It has truly been an honor.

## **Message from Keith E. Brandt, M.D. Executive Director, COVID-19 Update**

To call the COVID-19 pandemic unprecedented is certainly an understatement. With most medical centers limiting care to only coronavirus victims, trauma patients and cancer patients, these are strange times indeed. No specialty has been spared and some have been severely impacted, specifically Emergency Medicine and Intensive Care specialists. Plastic surgeons have been asked to stop all elective surgery, provide back up for EM physicians who are quarantined

and donate ventilators from their practices. The financial impact to everyone's practice is dramatic and the end is unknown.

While the ABPS never imagined such a global disruption of medical practice, it did recognize that there will be times when Diplomates will need flexibility in meeting ABPS Continuous Certification requirements.

The most important feature of the new Continuous Certification program is the Self-Assessment activity with annual internet-based administration set for April 1st through April 30th. The Board wanted the activity to be user friendly, educational, current and meaningful. So first: DON'T STUDY. Let me repeat, DON'T STUDY. The program is designed to identify your knowledge gaps "at your baseline." If you study, you will create an un-natural knowledge level. There is no need to study because after answering the question the first time, everyone, whether you answered right or wrong is shuffled to the rationale. If you answer incorrectly...you get a second chance! The Board simply wants to identify your knowledge gaps, give you that information so you can use it to guide future CME and improve your overall practice. It's a win – win.

Overall CME requirements have been reduced. Compared to the previous requirement of 150 CME every three years, the ABPS now only requires 25 CME per year (125 Category 1 credits in Plastic Surgery every 5 years). Reporting has also been reduced to only twice in 10 years.

The tracer procedures were developed to not only allow Diplomates to compare their practice with others doing similar procedures, but to also serve as a measurement to document practice improvement if you start a new protocol in your practice. Realizing that many Diplomates participate in practice improvement activities with their institutions, there are now new opportunities to have those activities recognized and satisfy the practice improvement requirement as an alternate to the tracer procedures. Applications for performance improvement activities are available [here](#).

The Board realizes that the current pandemic has resulted in significantly greater time commitments for some. The Board would like to point out the flexibility built into the program. The annual Self-Assessment activity only needs to be completed in 8 of 10 years, so you can skip a year. If you skip this year, the Self-Assessment will be archived and you can complete it next April. As a reminder, you will have the entire month of April to log in and out as many times as needed to complete the 30 questions.

The tracer procedure activity can draw cases from as far as 3 years back, so if you are not operating currently, you can use past cases, even if they are from 3 years ago.

The Board realizes that many Diplomates earn CME by attending annual meetings which have mostly been cancelled. There is also potentially increased cost with obtaining CME online. To

help Diplomates meet the CME requirement and eliminate this potential extra cost, the Board has decided to extend the due date for one year for any Diplomate who was scheduled to report CME by December 1, 2020. Diplomates will now have until December 1, 2021 to fulfill their CME. The Board will also waive any late fees related to the 2020 Annual Certification Fee.

**The ABPS wishes everyone continued good health and a quick return to business as usual. Stay safe.**

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## **New Certification Logo available to all Diplomates**



**CERTIFIED BY**  
**The American Board  
of Plastic Surgery Inc.™**

### **The Board of Directors are excited to introduce the new ABPS Certification Logo!**

The new logo was created in an effort to allow ABPS Diplomates a common method to represent themselves as ABPS Board Certified Plastic Surgeons. Use is encouraged by all diplomates, including both lifetime certificate holders and time-limited certificate holders. The logo may be used by diplomates in private practice, group practice, or academic profiles. The circle logo design represents the diplomate's commitment both to the public interest and to voluntary participation in a continuous program of assessment, education, and practice improvement.

A full style guide and multiple versions of the logo are available after log in on the [Board website](#).

You can access this through the My Profile page.

Chair

James C. Grotting, M.D.  
Chair-Elect

David H. Song, M.D.  
Vice-Chair

Lawrence B. Colen, M.D.  
Secretary-Treasurer

Keith E. Brandt, M.D.  
Executive Director



*2019 - 2020 ABPS Officers*

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**2019-2020 Officers of the Board**



*The American Board of Plastic Surgery, Inc.  
Directors 2019 - 2020 Phoenix, Arizona*

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**[View 2019-2020 Directors of the Board](#)**



*ABPS Current and Former Advisory Council Members  
Phoenix, Arizona 2019*

[\*\*View list of current Advisory Council Members\*\*](#)

### **Thank you**

The Board would like to acknowledge the Advisory Council members, Oral Examiners and Item Writers for their continued dedication, hard work and significant contributions throughout the year. These individuals are crucial to the development of the Written, Oral, Hand and Hand Recertification and Continuous Certification Examinations.

### **Attention Program Directors**

[View the Board's New Personal Leave Policy](#)

[and Important Notices](#)

### **2020 Examination Dates and Locations**

[\*\*Continuous Certification in Plastic Surgery Examination\*\*](#)

April 1, 2020 through April 30, 2020 - Internet-Based Test

## **Hand Surgery Recertification Examination**

April 1, 2020 through April 30, 2020 - Internet-Based Test

## **Hand Surgery Examination**

August 11, 2020, Tuesday - Computer Based Test at Prometric Test Centers throughout the United States and Canada

## **Written Examination**

October 26, 2020, Monday - Computer Based Test at Prometric Test Centers throughout the United States and Canada (rescheduled from May 19th)

## **Oral Examination**

November 12, 13, 14, 2020, Thursday, Friday and Saturday in Phoenix, Arizona

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## **2020 Potential Oral Examination Candidates**

The Board will review comments regarding the suitability of any candidate for certification. Please direct written comments on official letterhead, signed and received in the Board Office by **June 1, 2020**. If you are aware of a potential candidate omitted from this list, please email to [oral@abplasticsurgery.org](mailto:oral@abplasticsurgery.org).

2020 Oral Exam Potential Candidates

## **Congratulations to our New Board Diplomates**

**The ABPS certified 167 diplomates in 2019.  
To date, the ABPS has certified 9,666 plastic surgeons**

2019 New Diplomates

## **To our Diplomates who Successfully Completed the Continuous Certification Examination**

In 2019, 384 diplomates successfully completed the Continuous Certification Examination. Diplomates who successfully complete all components of the Continuous Certification program within the 10-year cycle will be sent a new certificate in December before expiration of the existing certificate.

In addition, 18 diplomates used the Hand Surgery Recertification Examination to continue

primary certification.

To date, 4,055 diplomates have participated in the Continuous Certification process including 242 via the Hand Surgery Examination.

2019 Continuous Certification and via Hand Exam

## **To our Diplomates who were Certified or Recertified in the Subspecialty of Hand Surgery**

In 2019, the ABPS certified 25 diplomates and recertified 38 diplomates in Hand Surgery. To date, the ABPS has certified 835 diplomates and recertified 540 diplomates in Hand Surgery.

2019 Hand Exam and Recertification

### **[View 2019 Examination Statistics](#)**

## **REVOKED CERTIFICATES**

To date, a total of 94 certificates have been revoked. The Board revoked three certificates in 2019. Those revoked ABPS certificates are:

Michael Damien Brandner, M.D. - CA  
Amnon Eric Sadeh, M.D. - NY  
Tristan Vaun Stonger, M.D. - IN

## **SUSPENSION OF CERTIFICATION**

The Board reports certification status as “Suspended” based on State Medical Board sanctions resulting in a suspended medical license. The diplomate will be informed of this action by the Ethics Committee.

## **Thank You to Our Diplomates!**

The Board values each of our diplomates and appreciates your support in carrying out the Board’s mission to protect the public and to distinguish ourselves as safe, ethical, efficacious plastic surgeons who have met high standards in order to achieve board certification.

The Board actively communicates with our major plastic surgery societies, regional societies, and legislative bodies to maintain a presence and to communicate our mission.

We are proud of what our certificate represents.

## **Board Staff**

Melissa A. Karch, MBA  
Administrator

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Test Development Manager/Examination Editor

Gwen A. Hanuscin

Written Examination and Projects Coordinator

Melissa M. Hill  
Oral Examination Coordinator

Stephanie L. Kash  
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Hand Surgery Examination Coordinator

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Examination Associate

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All communication and inquiries should be directed to the Board Office by emailing  
[info@abplasticsurgery.org](mailto:info@abplasticsurgery.org).

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Contact Us

