Certification renewal process of the American Board of Orthodontics

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The American Board of Orthodontics was established in 1929 and is the oldest specialty board in dentistry. Its goal is to protect the public by ensuring competency through the certification of eligible orthodontists. Originally, applicants for certification submitted a thesis, 5 case reports, and a set of casts with appliances. Once granted, the certification never expired. Requirements have changed over the years. In 1950, 15 cases were required, and then 10 in 1987. The Board has continued to refine and improve the certification process. In 1998, certification became time limited, and a renewal process was initiated. The Board continues to improve the recertification process. (Am J Orthod Dentofacial Orthop 2015;147:S232-3)

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he American Board of Orthodontics (ABO) congratulates the American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics (AJO-DO) for being a leading orthodontic resource for 100 years. The ABO and the AJO-DO have longtime ties and a common goal of fostering the development of the specialty for the benefit of the patients we treat. The relationship between the ABO and the AJO-DO has always been and continues to be strong.

From 1915 to 1917, all 7 ABO founding fathers contributed articles to the AJO-DO. From the time the AJO-DO began in 1915 until 1929 when the ABO was established, the AJO-DO paved the way by publishing many articles and editorials regarding the proper course for the specialty to follow.

The editor of the first issue of the International Journal of Orthodontia, as the AJO-DO was then named, was an ABO founding father, Dr Martin Dewey. In 1929, the 28th annual meeting of the American Society of Orthodontists was held in Estes Park, Colorado, and Dr Dewey was appointed to chair a committee to consider the president’s address. Dr Dewey’s committee offered a resolution to establish the American Board of Orthodontia that was adopted unanimously. The resolution states the ABO’s purpose as follows.

Whereas, the President has recommended the formation of an American Board of Orthodontia similar to the American Board of Otolaryngology and other similar boards formed for the purpose of regulating the specialties of medicine, which boards have rendered valuable service in standardizing and increasing the efficiency of medical specialists.

Since that time, the ABO has evolved. In 1939, board requirements were 1 thesis, 5 case reports, and a set of casts with appliances on it. In 1950, the American Dental Association approved the requirement of 15 cases. In 1987, case requirements went from 15 to 10 cases, and in 1998, certification became time limited. As a result, a certification renewal process has been developed.

The ABO celebrates 86 years of existence in 2015. It is the oldest specialty board in dentistry, and the goal is to protect the public by ensuring competency through certifying and certification renewal of eligible orthodontists. In 2004, the ABO published the first article on certification renewal in the AJO-DO. The article reviewed the mission of the ABO, which is divided into 4 parts: (1) to evaluate the knowledge and clinical competency of graduates of accredited orthodontic programs; (2) to reevaluate clinical competency throughout a diplomate’s career by using certification renewal; (3) to contribute to the development of quality graduate,
postgraduate, and continuing education programs in orthodontics; and (4) to contribute to certification expertise worldwide. It also discussed the rationale of certification renewal, which was to ensure the highest standards and continued competency of practicing orthodontists. The ABO perceives this as critical to the survival of the orthodontic specialty and enacted its certification renewal policy by issuing time-limited certificates to examinees who applied for initial certification after January 1, 1998. Many board-certified orthodontists are now due for the first Certification Renewal Examination; thus, the purpose of this article is to clarify the process, in terms of the timing and requirements, for the renewal examination.

Recently, the Board simplified the pathways to certification and certification renewal. The first Certification Renewal Examination will follow successful completion of the first Clinical Examination of all time-limited certification pathways. The examination may be taken no earlier than 2 years before the expiration date printed on the board-certified orthodontist’s certificate. All certificates awarded will be time limited and expire 10 years after the completion of this examination. Any remaining time on the current certificate will be added to the diplomate’s new certificate. This examination may be taken in person or by mail or electronic case submission.

For the first Certification Renewal Examination, it is required to have 2 cases with a discrepancy index value of 20 or greater treated by the examinee from his or her orthodontic practice. In addition, the examinee needs to complete an online, multiple-choice examination consisting of scenario-based questions and/or questions from literature on the reading list published on the ABO’s Web site. The 2 cases must have been initiated within the orthodontist’s current certification time frame or within the past 10 years. No more than 1 case treated with orthognathic surgery (identified as “surgical case”) may be included in the 2 cases displayed. Substitutions with a discrepancy index value of 10 or greater are allowed for (1) a nonorthognathic surgical case with a bilateral end-to-end Class II or unilateral full-step Class II molar relationship corrected to a Class I molar and canine relationship (identified as “Class II case”) and (2) a nonorthognathic surgical case treated with 4-quadrant extractions that demonstrates effective management of the extraction sites (identified as “extraction case”). The examinee may substitute 2 extraction cases, 2 Class II cases, or a combination of 1 each as long as the discrepancy index values and the individual case requirements are met.

Full-time orthodontic educators who have met all other requirements may present the 2 required cases that the educator directly supervised while teaching in a Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA)-approved orthodontic program. The supervised cases may not include a case that has been, or will be, presented to the ABO by a resident of the orthodontic program. Individual consideration will be given to full-time educators who graduate from CODA-accredited orthodontic programs and are teaching at or affiliated with a graduate orthodontic program outside the United States and Canada.

No case may be presented to the Board more than 1 time for any Certification Renewal Examination. The second, third, and fourth Certification Renewal Examinations have the same requirements, such as time limits, eligibility, and written examination. The case requirement, however, is different from the first Certification Renewal Examination in that only 1 case is required with a discrepancy index value of 20 or greater and may be substituted for a Class II case or a 4-quadrant extraction case with a discrepancy index value of 10 or greater.

The ABO Web site, www.americanboardortho.com, is a rich resource of information about all examinations, including examination dates, fees, registration, and application forms. The well-trained ABO staff or your constituent ABO director can answer any additional questions.

The ABO has made a commitment to the public that the highest levels of clinical excellence are to be established and maintained. We believe that certification and certification renewal throughout a board-certified orthodontist’s career will ensure the public’s well-being, maintain the highest standards of orthodontic care, and ensure the survival of the specialty.

REFERENCES