

AOA News Extra

NCQA: Profession is "clearly on the right path" with ABO

The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), which accredits health care plans in all 50 states, covering 109 million Americans – 70.5 percent of those who are enrolled in health plans — has stated its support for the creation of the American Board of Optometry.

NCQA "commends the efforts of the American Optometric Association — and the other optometric organizations that are involved with developing board certification and Maintenance of Certification (MOC) — for embarking on a process that will lead to board certification of optometrists. The profession of optometry is clearly on the right path with its proposal for the American Board of Optometry," wrote L. Gregory Pawlson, M.D., MPH, executive vice president of NCQA, in a letter to AOA President Randolph E. Brooks, O.D., on Sept. 30.

[Read NCQA's letter here.](#)

"It is NCQA's belief that MOC following initial board certification is a crucial component of quality. MOC, as a professional response to the need for public accountability and transparency, allows professionals to demonstrate their practice-related ability to provide quality patient care." Dr. Pawlson wrote. "Board certification itself is a highly respected general credential awarded to physicians who have met standards for cognitive expertise, self-assessment, and evaluation of medical knowledge, judgment, and skills."

In the letter to the AOA, Dr. Pawlson acknowledged the importance of the optometric profession's work. "We appreciate the difficult challenges faced by your profession in concurrently unveiling initial board certification and MOC processes. Though this presents challenges, these processes will go far to provide the assurances that each day seem more likely to be integral to health care reform," he said.

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NCQA has been an active, and effective, participant in the dialogue concerning health care reform.

In a recent letter to Senators Max Baucus and Chuck Grassley, NCQA noted its support of the proposal to include participation and completion of a Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program as an option for qualifying for Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) incentive payments. The proposal was part of the health care reform bill that was subsequently introduced in the Senate.

"In addition to our relationship with the AOA over the years, the NCQA has been working with other policy leaders, employers, doctors, health plans, and consumer advocates, constantly seeking to advance health care quality by identifying important areas of health care, developing new measures to assess performance, and driving improvement. The NCQA seeks to help people find doctors who consistently treat patients according to the best available scientific evidence," wrote Dr. Pawlson.

"It remains clear that comprehensive health reform is needed if we are to keep the promise of the high-quality, high-performing, affordable care we all deserve. Holding health care providers accountable for the quality and efficiency of the care they deliver is a key component in assuring that the promise is kept," he noted.

"NCQA has been a national leader in quality assurance for health care since 1990," said Dr. Brooks. "We are heartened by their assurance that our efforts to bring board certification and maintenance of certification to the optometric profession are consistent with their vision for reforming America's health care system."