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JOINT BOARD CERTIFICATION PROJECT TEAM PROPOSES DRAFT BOARD CERTIFICATION PROCESS FOR OPTOMETRY

ST. LOUIS, MO, January 23, 2009 – The Joint Board Certification Project Team (JBCPT), formed by six optometric organizations in 2007, released a model framework for a board certification process for optometry and began presenting it to leaders within the profession. At the core of the initial board certification program will be a Patient Assessment and Management-like examination that tests knowledge in core categories.

Beginning this month, members of the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), the American Optometric Association (AOA), the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA), the Association of Regulatory Boards in Optometry (ARBO), the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) and the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBE) will be briefed on details of the model framework by representatives from the project team.

AOA representative to the JBCPT David A. Cockrell, O.D., noted, “For 18 months, the Joint Board Certification Project Team researched other professional health certification processes and talked to experts and practitioners throughout the country to develop this proposal. We believe it is a credible model that addresses many of the issues of interest to members of the profession.”

“We hope the specifics contained in this model proposal contribute to the ongoing discussion within the profession regarding the future of board certification,” said Thomas L. Lewis, O.D., Ph.D., AAO representative to the JBCPT.

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“It is vital to demonstrate to our patients, as well as to health care advocates, the federal government, and managed care programs, that a doctor of optometry meets high standards of competence,” said Arol R. Augsburger, O.D., ASCO representative to the JBCPT. “The model we’ve proposed should help us determine how the profession can best meet those demands.”

A key area of the proposed certification process is demonstrating a commitment to continuing education in order to qualify for the certification exam.

“We wanted to design a model based partly on continuing education but to make sure that the requirements were flexible enough to apply to optometrists in general practice,” said AOSA representative to the JBCPT, Christopher S. Wolfe, O.D.

The proposed post-graduate educational requirements call for optometrists to attain a minimum of 150 points after initial licensure to be eligible for the examination. These points may be attained in a number of ways such as residency, Clinical Fellowship in the American Academy of Optometry and/or other educational activities including continuing education.

Once practitioners become board-certified, maintenance of certification as a means of demonstrating continued competence is an important part of the process. Self-Assessment Modules (SAMs) and Performance In Practice Modules (PPMs) designed to enhance knowledge and skills significant to the practice of optometry are in their early stages of development.

“My fellow team members and I encourage all optometrists to study the model we’ve proposed and provide feedback,” said William B. Rafferty, O.D., ARBO representative to the JBCPT. “Refining the model and ensuring that it meets the needs of the profession should be important to every optometrist.”

NBEO representative to the JBCPT, Donovan L. Crouch, O.D., concurred, “Opening up the development process now to get as many viewpoints as possible is the only way we can make sure any board certification process addresses the current and future needs of optometrists and the patients we serve.”

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Optometry’s Joint Board Certification Project Team *consists of representatives from the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), the American Optometric Association (AOA), the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA), the Association of Regulatory Boards in Optometry (ARBO), the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) and the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO).*

Details concerning the plan can be obtained from the JBCPT member organizations’ Web sites:

AAO: www.aaopt.org
AOA: www.aoa.org/JBCPT.xml
AOSA: www.theaosa.org
ARBO: www.arbo.org
ASCO: www.opted.org
NBEO: www.optometry.org