



AMERICAN BOARD OF
FOOT AND ANKLE SURGERY®

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December 2, 2022

As the committee responsible for granting surgical privileges to physicians, we know that you consider a variety of factors to ensure a strong professional staff and positive patient outcomes. Given that board certification is one of the many factors you weigh, a recent development in the podiatric field merits your attention as it could present a potential risk to patient safety.

The American Podiatric Medical Association (APMA) and Council on Podiatric Medical Education (CPME) have long recognized that there are two distinct specialties in which to be board certified: medicine and surgery.

Recognized boards require graduation from a CPME-accredited college of podiatric medical education, completion of a CPME-approved, three-year residency, and completion of a comprehensive examination process. CPME recognizes the American Board of Podiatric Medicine (ABPM) as the certifying board for non-surgical podiatric medicine, including orthotics, dermatology and biomechanics of the foot and ankle.

Importantly, the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ABFAS) is the only certifying board recognized by CPME for the specialty area of podiatric surgery.

Over 10,000 podiatrists have earned ABFAS Board Certification by demonstrating specialized competency and skill in foot and ankle surgery. We represent them as the ABFAS Board of Directors. ABFAS Board Certification is a rigorous, two-step process, which includes significant case review to ensure a thorough level of clinical experience and surgical skill has been achieved prior to granting surgical Board Certification. ABFAS is the only recognized certification board in podiatry that undertakes this review of a surgeon's skill.

Recently, the American Board of Podiatric Medicine (ABPM) opened applications for what it calls a "Certificate of Added Qualification (CAQ) in Podiatric Surgery," outside of the profession's traditional certification process. Several leading podiatric organizations – including the [American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons](#), [Council on Podiatric Medical Education](#), and the [American Podiatric Medical Association](#) – have raised serious concerns about ABPM's launch of the new CAQ and the potential confusion it may cause among patients and hospitals.

To quote directly from [APMA's August 12, 2022 statement](#) on the issue (with emphasis added):

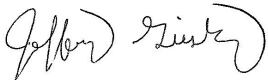
"APMA believes there is **a strong possibility that a CAQ in Podiatric Surgery could confuse and mislead the public**. A physician who has just completed residency is eligible to earn this CAQ. For those more than three years out of residency, ABPM requires only 25 total cases (five cases from each of five categories) with no requirement for diversity within those categories. Compare these scenarios to ABFAS board certification in foot surgery, which requires at least 65 cases. The CAQ in

Podiatric Surgery has ***a high potential to mislead a patient to believe a surgeon has more experience and expertise than they do.*** The CAQ also causes ***greater confusion for other health-care specialties, insurance companies, state legislators, and hospitals,*** which already frequently mischaracterize podiatrists' education, training and certification."

We believe it is important for patients, providers, the broader medical community, and especially the members of this committee to understand the differences between ABFAS Board Certification in foot and ankle surgery and ABPM's unrecognized CAQ in podiatric surgery. The two are not comparable credentials.

We respectfully submit that it would be in the best interests of patients for the hospital to require ABFAS Certification for podiatric surgeons, though we recognize that the hospital must make its own decision based upon relevant factors. ABFAS has posted additional information online about [the difference between ABFAS Board Certification and ABPM's CAQ](#). We encourage you to review this page and contact ABFAS directly if you have any questions or concerns about this matter.

Sincerely,



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