



A Statement from APMA on the Announcement of a Certificate of Added Qualification in Podiatric Surgery by the American Board of Podiatric Medicine

APMA's mission is to defend our members' ability to practice to the full extent of their education and training to best serve the public health. In fulfilling that mission, APMA depends on board certification through the two CPME-recognized boards, the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery (ABFAS) and the American Board of Podiatric Medicine (ABPM). The rigorous board certification processes established by these two organizations support APMA's work to demonstrate our members' education, training, experience, and ongoing commitment to quality care.

APMA has concerns about the announcement by ABPM of a new Certificate of Added Qualification (CAQ) in Podiatric Surgery:

- We have heard from members in support of and in opposition to this new CAQ. There are strong feelings on both sides, creating division and discord within a small profession that depends on unity and collaboration to accomplish its goals.
- The profession has long recognized that there are two distinct specialties in which to be board certified: medicine and surgery. Our single, standardized Podiatric Medicine and Surgery Residency provides access to either or both certifying boards, depending on the choice and practice activity of the individual physician. Our current president, Laura J. Pickard, DPM, is among those physicians who hold certification from *both* boards.
- In 2019, APMA convened a Blue-Ribbon Panel to examine specialty board recognition. One outcome of that process, in which both ABFAS and ABPM participated, was a recommendation that APMA reaffirm its longstanding policy of recognizing only one certifying board for each unique area of clinical practice. Recognizing only one board in each area was deemed critical to serving the public interest and mitigating confusion in the health-care community. A CAQ in Podiatric Surgery offered by ABPM would seem to be a duplication of what is already offered by the recognized board for certification in surgery.
- 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.

In light of these concerns, APMA consulted with the Council on Podiatric Medical Education. While ABPM notes that CAQs are not recognized by CPME, CPME does have oversight of the boards through its Specialty Board Recognition Committee (SBRC). CPME issued a statement on August 11 requesting that specialty boards “refrain from implementing CAQs, including the CAQ in podiatric surgery,” until CPME has an opportunity to complete the planned rewrite of its SBRC documents. APMA supports CPME’s statement and its request for delayed implementation.

APMA also has reached out to ABFAS and ABPM in an effort to mediate the current situation and broker an outcome that is most beneficial for our members and their patients.