

## American Board of Emergency Medicine

### Becoming an ABEM Director

#### Background

Serving on the Board of Directors of the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) is a significant professional accomplishment. Positioning oneself for consideration typically takes years of effort, in large part because the ABEM Board is a working board that requires a significant commitment of time. Moreover, because directors serve as examination editors for written exams and Chief Examiners for the Oral Certification Exam (OCE), a substantial amount of experience in examining or assessment is valued. Finally, directors also frequently represent ABEM to other organizations. New directors are elected to their position by current Board members. They serve four-year terms and are eligible to serve up to two consecutive terms.

#### Fundamental Requirements

All nominees must meet the following criteria:

- Be a graduate of an ACGME-accredited EM residency program.
- Be ABEM certified for ten or more years.
- Show active involvement in organized EM. Ideally, this will include experience as an ABEM question (item) writer, oral examiner, or appointed representative.
- Be involved in the clinical practice of EM.
- Participate in ABEM recertification and continuing certification activities (e.g., MOC).

#### Desirable Traits

The Board looks for the following traits when selecting new directors:

- The skills and knowledge necessary to serve as a positive leader.
- An interest in the examination process.
- A strong belief in the value of the specialty and career-long learning.
- Experience working with outside organizations.
- The ability to talk about core issues and ideas.
- A passion for ABEM's mission and vision.
- The ability to support a Board decision regardless of an individual position.
- Organizational leadership within an EM organization or at one's local hospital (including community hospitals).
- Available time to meet ABEM demands: about 4-8 hours weekly on ABEM-related tasks and 40 days per year away from their home and workplace on dedicated ABEM activities.
- Expertise that aligns with ABEM's immediate needs.

#### Creating a Path to the Board

*A primary axiom is that prior experience with ABEM has a significant, favorable impact on being elected to the Board of Directors.* Accordingly, positioning a physician for viable consideration to

the ABEM Board often takes many years. In addition to years of preparation, it is unlikely that a physician will be elected to the Board on his or her first attempt.

Because directors serve as leaders in the physician assessment process, experience with ABEM oral or written examinations is almost a requirement. It is highly unlikely that a physician who is not an experienced ABEM volunteer could join the ABEM Board. Again, this factor is based on the necessity for high-quality performance by directors in the development, administration, and scoring of a high-stakes physician assessment.

There are three primary ways to participate with ABEM: 1) become an oral examiner, 2) become an item (question) writer for an examination, and 3) other volunteer activities. Other volunteer activities include but are not restricted to serving on a subspecialty subboard or exam committee, participating in standard-setting activities, and serving on ad hoc task forces.

The most common introduction to ABEM volunteerism is as an oral examiner. There is a waiting list to become an examiner and it often takes 2-3 consecutive years of nominations to be selected. Currently there are approximately 470 oral examiners. Demonstration of excellence as an examiner over time can position a physician to become a Team Leader. Although becoming a Team Leader enhances one's position for Board consideration, most physicians are not Team Leaders prior to being elected to the Board.

Being an item writer provides greater interface with the ABEM Board because there is a closer working connection between item writers and directors. There are approximately 36 item writers. Since high-quality, multiple choice question (MCQ) writing takes years to develop, and since ABEM directors serve as editors for every MCQ, item-writing experience is also highly desirable (but not absolutely necessary) for physicians seeking to become an ABEM director. Although not every item writer is an oral examiner, most (approximately 60-70 percent) do serve as oral examiners.

Volunteering for other ABEM activities such as standard-setting panels, task forces, working groups, and other activities provides a broader and clearer picture to others interested in serving ABEM. In addition, ABEM becomes more familiar with the physician, which typically favors the chance of being selected for the ABEM Board.

*Finally, ABEM is committed to having a diverse Board and a varied group of volunteers. Physicians who bring diversity of thought, geography, practice setting, gender, ethnicity, and expertise are highly valued.*