

Sept. 12, 2012

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Society of Interventional Radiology Hails Affirmation of Specialty's Role in Patient Care

Interventional Radiology Now a Primary Specialty in Medicine; ABMS Recognizes Unique IR Skill Set With the New Dual Certificate in Interventional Radiology and Diagnostic Radiology

FAIRFAX, Va.—The Society of Interventional Radiology hailed the Sept. 11 decision by the American Board of Medical Specialties—the organization that has oversight of the 24 recognized medical specialty boards—to approve the American Board of Radiology's application for a new Dual Primary Certificate in Interventional Radiology and Diagnostic Radiology. With this approval, ABMS and its member boards confirmed the benefit to patients of the unique interventional radiology skill set comprised of competency in diagnostic imaging, image-guided procedures and periprocedural patient care.

“Support for the Dual Certificate in Interventional Radiology and Diagnostic Radiology by ABMS is a seminal event in the history of interventional radiology—and one that will benefit future patients by providing well-trained minimally invasive image-guided specialists,” said SIR President Marshall E. Hicks, M.D., FSIR, who represents the national society of nearly 5,000 doctors, scientists and allied health professionals dedicated to improving health care through minimally invasive treatments. “The Society of Interventional Radiology applauds ABR for its dedication and hard work in advancing the specialty and the interventional radiology skill set, a unique combination of interpretive and procedural skill, accompanied by corresponding clinical expertise,” said Hicks, the head of the division of diagnostic imaging at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

“This is an important step in the formalization of the interventionalist's clinical role. Recognition of the interventional radiologist's imaging, technical and periprocedural patient care competencies speaks directly to the specialty's focus on patients, innovation and advanced image-guided techniques,” said John A. Kaufman, M.D., FSIR, a past president of SIR and director of the Dotter Interventional Institute in Portland, Ore. “First and foremost, future patients will benefit from this,” said Kaufman, who chaired the SIR/ABR task force that has been developing the certificate since 2005.

The new Dual Certificate in Interventional Radiology and Diagnostic Radiology will be the fourth primary certificate for ABR and the 37th overall in the United States. A primary certificate is different from a subspecialty certificate as it designates a unique and distinct area of medicine, rather than an area of focus within an existing specialty.

“Since the early 20th century, board certification—a form of professional self-regulation—has assured the public of the qualifications of medical professionals,” said Gary J. Becker, M.D., FSIR, ABR executive director. “Only rarely does the house of medicine acknowledge the importance of a new primary specialty certificate in fulfilling these responsibilities. ABR supported the creation of this primary certificate based on the need to ensure that future trainees acquire the requisite combination of clinical, procedural and interpretive skills necessary for the safe and competent practice of interventional radiology. The interventional radiology and diagnostic radiology certificate ensures that board-certified interventional radiologists are trained and qualified to deliver the highest level of care available today, and it demands that this same quality be made available to all future patients,” he added.

“ABR is pleased to offer this new certification and notes its importance to patients, the public and the profession. The addition of the interventional radiology/diagnostic radiology certificate to the other primary certificates offered by ABR—Diagnostic Radiology, Radiation Oncology and Medical Physics—rounds out a full range of ABR primary certification services in diagnostic, therapeutic and image-guided procedures, as well as periprocedural clinical care,” said ABR President James P. Borgstede, M.D. “I would like to acknowledge the vision, leadership and commitment to quality patient care of ABR past presidents N. Reed Dunnick, M.D., and Bruce G. Haffty, M.D., who helped to guide the application and approval process. Finally, ABR notes that a very positive and productive collaboration with SIR on this important endeavor made the new certificate possible,” he added.

“The interventional radiology and diagnostic radiology certificate will help ensure that all patients in the country continue to receive high-quality, consistent, diagnostic, procedural and clinical interventional care,” said Jeanne M. LaBerge, M.D., FSIR, an ABR trustee and interventional radiologist at the University of California, San Francisco. “The recent approval of the interventional radiology and diagnostic radiology certificate formalizes this belief and gives ‘specialty’ status to the field of interventional radiology while maintaining its intimate and necessary relation to diagnostic radiology,” said Matthew A. Mauro, M.D., FSIR, an SIR past president and ABR trustee. “The elevation of interventional radiology to a ‘specialty’ level with its own distinct residency program places interventional radiology/diagnostic radiology on the same level as surgery, pediatrics and internal medicine in the ABMS hierarchy. This ABMS vote is much more than a superficial clerical action—it is one that initiates a formalized enhanced training program that will benefit patients across the country and serve as a model throughout the world,” added Mauro, professor and chair, department of radiology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

“Securing the interventional radiology and diagnostic radiology certificate took tremendous effort by many individuals and support from many societies,” said Kaufman. Organizations that support the certificate besides ABR include the American College of Radiology, American Osteopathic College of Radiology, American Roentgen Ray Society, Association of Program Directors in Radiology, Association of Program Directors in Interventional Radiology, American Association for Women Radiologists, American Society of Neuroradiology, Association of University Radiologists, Coalition for Imaging and Bioengineering Research, Radiological Society of North America, Radiology Residency Review Committee of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, Society for Pediatric Radiology, Society of Chairs of Academic Radiology Departments, Society of NeuroInterventional Surgery and Society of Vascular Medicine.

More information about the Society of Interventional Radiology, interventional radiologists and how to find an interventional radiologist in your area can be found online at www.SIRweb.org.

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About the Society of Interventional Radiology

Interventional radiologists are physicians who specialize in minimally invasive, targeted treatments. They offer the most in-depth knowledge of the least invasive treatments available coupled with diagnostic and clinical experience across all specialties. They use X-ray, MRI and other imaging to advance a catheter in the body, such as in an artery, to treat at the source of the disease internally. As the inventors of angioplasty and the catheter-delivered stent, which were first used in the legs to treat peripheral arterial disease, interventional radiologists pioneered minimally invasive modern medicine. Today, interventional oncology is a growing specialty area of interventional radiology. Interventional radiologists can deliver treatments for cancer directly to the tumor without significant side effects or damage to nearby normal tissue.

Many conditions that once required surgery can be treated less invasively by interventional radiologists. Interventional radiology treatments offer less risk, less pain and less recovery time compared to open surgery. Visit www.SIRweb.org.

Local interviews are available by contacting SIR's communications department staff: Ellen Acconcia, SIR communications manager/practice areas, eaconcia@SIRweb.org, (703) 460-5582, or Maryann Verrillo, SIR director of communications and public relations, mverrillo@SIRweb.org, (703) 460-5572.