CertLink® as a Quality Improvement Project for ABPMR Maintenance of Certification

### Background
In the past, the ABPMR has received criticism after what diplomates perceived as swift changes to the ABPMR Maintenance of Certification (MOC) Program; diplomate feedback indicates confusion about what they see as constantly changing requirements. And while longitudinal assessment (LA) has shown promise for promoting lifelong learning and assessing knowledge, the ABPMR hasn't tested whether LA participation can produce equal or better results on our standard, secure 10-year examination, which is psychometrically sound and currently the gold standard in assessment for certification.

These and other considerations led the ABPMR to conduct its own quality improvement (QI) project via CertLink® pilot rather than "flipping the switch" and incorporating LA into the ABPMR MOC Program for all diplomates.

### Methods
1. The ABPMR randomly selected diplomates from a cohort with expiration dates between 2019 and 2022 — those eligible to take the MOC Examination in 2019-2022.
2. Diplomates who accepted agreed to:
   a. Answer all CertLink questions and related surveys during the pilot
   b. Receive MOC-related incentives for their participation (see Illustration 2)
3. The ABPMR will evaluate the outcome measures after two years and decide whether LA/CertLink improve user satisfaction

### Objectives
- Using CertLink as a QI project, the ABPMR will determine:
  - Whether LA promotes learning and improves examination performance
  - If LA could replace the MOC Examination
  - If LA and CertLink improve user satisfaction
- This will be measured via four outcomes:
  1. Performance on questions after reading critique
  2. User satisfaction
  3. Performance on clone items
  4. CertLink score
- ABPMR CertLinkTM MOC Assessment Pilot

### Initial Outcomes
The ABPMR started its pilot in April 2018 and will continue through 2020. Pilot results aren’t available yet.

One initial unexpected outcome was that participation in the pilot was more difficult to procure than anticipated. A total of 1,050 diplomates were invited over three rounds of invitations in order to amass just over 400 affirmative responses — a rate that doesn’t align with other boards’ experiences recruiting participants.

### Conclusion/Discussion
There are positives and negatives of the QI project approach. Positives include:
- Pilot gives a chance to test the effectiveness of LA before implementation, hopefully resulting in a lower chance of course-correction later
- Results will support a data-driven approach to major MOC decisions
- Slow and steady progress allows discussions of philosophy of MOC now before any shifts; also allows time for external MOC initiatives to conclude (i.e., Visioning Initiative) prior to changes rolling out to all diplomates

Potential negatives include:
- Diplomates are eager for MOC change now; this is a slower approach than many desire
- Psychometric and survey response analysis may produce unexpected results, forcing a reevaluation of planned transition to CertLink/LA for MOC
- ABPMR may feel a bit behind the innovation curve by the time the pilot has concluded

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Illustration 1: QI Project Timeline, Outcomes, Questions

Illustration 2: ABPMR CertLink Pilot Participant Incentives