RADIOLOGY ASSOCIATES
OF NORTHERN KENTUCKY
*Imaging, Intervention & Innovation*

# Pathway to 100% MOC Commitment in a Large Private Practice Radiology Group Dealing with Fear, Uncertainty and Oral Exam - o - Phobia

St. Elizabeth HEALTHCARE

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## Purpose

To describe the process and educational efforts used to get a 30 radiologist private practice group made up overwhelmingly of ABR Lifetime Certificate holders, to democratically commit to requiring all radiologists enroll in the American Board of Radiology Voluntary Maintenance of Certification (MOC) process.

## Background

Radiology Associates of Northern Kentucky (RANK, Edgewood, KY) is a 31 physician practice with 30 radiologists, 26 of whom hold Lifetime Certificates from the ABR and are not *required* to participate in the MOC process. All radiologists are ABR diplomates and 4 of the group hold time limited certificates, and are already enrolled in the MOC process.

The idea for requiring all RANK radiologists to enroll in the ABR Voluntary Recertification process of the MOC was presented to the leadership of the practice. This resolution was supported at the executive committee level but required a majority group vote of all shareholders. Of 25 shareholders in the corporation, 24 are Lifetime Certificate holders.

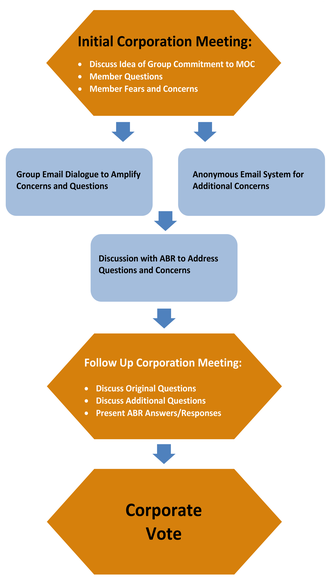
## Educational Process (Figure 1)

An initial meeting was held to present the idea and let individual radiologists voice fears, questions and concerns. An email dialogue with the group was subsequently done to amplify and uncover additional concerns. An anonymous email system was established using an online survey tool, so that radiologists could voice concerns without fear of public or individual repercussions.

The authors collated the concerns and fears, and worked with the staff at the American Board of Radiology to answer and address each fear and concern. The staff were most helpful, and pointed out that most of the questions have already been discussed in the frequently asked questions (FAQ) section of the MOC page of the ABR for Diagnostic Radiology (DR) (http://www.theabr.org/moc/moc_faq_who.html#life).

At a follow up corporation meeting, MOC enrollment was presented with an hour allowed for discussion. The authors presented the educational program covering previously aired concerns. Discussion answered additional concerns. There was a debate about the merits versus "risks" of enrolling in Voluntary Recertification.

## Figure 1




## Fears and Concerns

**Q** SAMs are unfamiliar and I haven't done them before. Are they hard?

**A** *SAM is short for self-assessment-module, and is a form of CME. They are available online or at most conferences. They are no harder than "traditional CME"*

**Q** Is it expensive?

**A** *No. The administrative fees are nominal, and the costs for SAMs and CME are no different than for maintaining your medical license in most cases. The total 10 year cycle costs are on par with a 5 day course of CME.*

**Q** Do I have to travel to Louisville to take the examination?

**A** *No. The computer-based examination will be administered all over the country at approved testing centers, and most radiologists will not have to drive far at all to get to a testing center.*

**Q** I don't want to have to study material I no longer practice in real life? Do I have to?

**A** *No. The competency examination in years 8-10 of the MOC cycle are 20% non interpretive general questions, and 80% clinical questions, based on what you actually practice. If you are 100% MSK, then your clinical will be all MSK.*

**Q** Can our failure of the competency exam be used against us in court if we are sued?

**A** *The only information that the ABR would release to anyone is whether you are participating in the MOC process; not whether you have passed an exam, or how up to date you are in your progress.*

**Q** Will others in our group know whether I fail the competency exam?

**A** *No. The ONLY information anyone can find out about you is whether you are participating in the MOC process or not.*

**Q** Can our hospital use this information against us?

**A** *Quite the opposite is more likely. Hospitals and government agencies are recognizing that the process of maintaining competency is valuable, and to be encouraged. There is really no "information" available other than whether or not you are participating.*

**Q** How do I do a PQI?

**A** *PQI projects are a process of thinking about how something can be done better. You develop a plan. You come up with metrics to figure out if you made a positive impact with your improvement. You measure before and after making your change. There are a number of available PQI projects already in place to choose from, or you can make up your own.*

**Q** What do we get for doing all this; more payment?

**A** *In fact, SOON. Participation in MOC according to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) will become an option to fulfill requirements for the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) program. ABR is currently working to satisfy CMS requirements so its diplomates can receive a bonus on Medicare reimbursements.*

**Q** As a Lifetime Certificate Holder, do I lose my ABR certification if I fail the MOC process?

**A** *NO. Regardless of your status in MOC, if you currently hold a lifetime certificate, that will not be affected.*

## MOC Process Simplified

MOC is a process for demonstrating ongoing effort at learning and maintaining competency. It consists of four components:

1. Professional Standing
   *translated* - Maintain your active medical license(s)
2. Lifelong Learning and Periodic Self-assessment
   *translated* - Do CME and SAM modules throughout the 10 year cycle
3. Cognitive Expertise
   *translated* - Take a computer based test on WHAT YOU ACTUALLY PRACTICE
4. Practice Performance
   *translated* - work on projects to make you or your workplace better (PQI)

## Results

The group finally agreed to commit to a 5 year plan in enrolling in MOC, with a renewal vote to commit to the subsequent half of the recertification timeline in 4 years.

Fears held by Lifetime Certified radiologists fell into two general categories. There was a profound fear of the competency examination in years 8 – 10 of the cycle, stemming from memories of their original oral examination with the ABR in Louisville. There was a fear by some that failure to pass the entire 10 year MOC recertification process and the competency examination would be made available to the public and be potentially used against them in future lawsuits. The costs associated with the process were not cited as a concern. Initial skepticism of the SAM format was quickly dissipated by personal experiences by a number of RANK members. There was little fear of the PQI process, and a group commitment to help each other on projects over the timeline was prevalent.

Educational efforts about privacy of information, increasing valuation of MOC processes in general and the lack of discoverability by attorneys was effective at showing all of these type fears to be unfounded. The fear of the competency examination was persistent. Lack of personal experience with the computer based examination hindered the educational effort. In fact, a majority of the group was unwilling to agree to stay involved through the examination timeline, but was willing to begin the process and voted for a 5 year group-wide commitment. The group also voted to discuss and vote on renewal of group commitment to the second half of the 10 year MOC cycle in year 4.

## Conclusions

RANK is a typical large private practice group, with well-intentioned, excellent radiologists. We found that starting a 10 year project of something "new and uncertain" is daunting to anyone. With discussion and education, we voted to take the MOC "process" at its word, as a path where the "start" comes long before the "finish line."

Fear of the competency examination is strong. Ongoing educational efforts by the ABR, and increasing actual experience with the computer based examination by time limited certified radiologists will hopefully mitigate this fear over time.

## References

The American Board of Radiology. http://www.theabr.org
The American Board of Medical Specialties. http://abms.org