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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Board adopts 4 pilot projects to prepare for system to ensure physician competency

DES MOINES, IA – The Iowa Board of Medicine will begin preliminary work in July on a national initiative aimed at strengthening patient care by requiring licensed physicians to participate in programs that enable them to maintain or improve their competence in the scope of their daily medical practice.

The Board on Friday (June 8, 2012) authorized staff to pursue four pilot projects in cooperation with the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) as a prelude to determining what may be required of physicians to demonstrate professional competence when seeking licensure renewal.

Iowa is one of 11 state medical boards that have agreed to undertake projects this year to determine how competency assessments might be integrated in the licensure renewal process and to survey physicians and other stakeholders about how to best assure the ongoing competence of physicians.

At an FSMB meeting in late April, nine pilot projects were reviewed to the participating states. Iowa selected these four:

- 1) Conduct a “readiness” inventory to determine what the Board needs to consider and possibly resolve to ensure successful participation in all pilot projects and eventually the implementation of maintenance of licensure (MOL) system.
- 2) Prepare a comprehensive strategy to communicate the value and importance of MOL.

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- 3) Evaluate and assess how to integrate MOL in the licensure renewal process.
- 4) Survey licensees for their opinions about potential features of a comprehensive MOL system.

Amy Van Maanen, director of licensure for the Iowa Board, said information derived from the pilot projects will be used by the FSMB to help develop policies and practices to build a model framework for states to adopt in their implementation of an MOL system.

In Iowa, and most other states, physicians issued a permanent medical license are not required to pursue continuing education specific to their practice. Most physicians do, however, especially those who are certified by a specialty board.

Van Maanen said it is very premature to know what the MOL system might be for Iowa. She said whatever is ultimately adopted, it should be administratively feasible, developed in collaboration with other stakeholders and not overly burdensome for the profession.

“Maintenance of licensure should support physicians’ commitment to lifelong learning and facilitate improvement in physician practice,” she said.

The MOL initiative gained momentum in 2004 when the FSMB, a coalition of 70 state medical licensing boards, adopted a policy statement that “state medical boards have a responsibility to the public” to ensure that physicians are maintaining their competency.

Over the past eight years, the FSMB has facilitated a national discussion on the MOL initiative with state boards, national physician associations, medical and osteopathic specialty certification boards and other stakeholders.

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