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How Schools Prepare Residents for the American Board of Orthodontics (ABO) Clinical Examination *A summary of incentives, programs and support systems*

Albert Einstein Medical Center Philadelphia

The Maxwell S. Fogel Department of Dental Medicine encourages ABO certification by appointing an ABO advocate to speak with residents during the three-year process, incorporating recommended reading into the curriculum, encouraging its residents to take the written board in their second year and offering a number of clinical mock up boards. Vanessa Morenzi, DMD, Program Director and Chair reports that 100 percent of students take the ABO Written Examination. Residents are well prepared with two seminars a month to go over cases using the ABO format. Dr. Morenzi says the hope is that students are so familiar with all the parts of the board that they are comfortable and confident taking the exam.

Columbia University College of Dental Medicine

At Columbia University, the program helps residents screen potential board patients from the beginning of treatment. From the start, the faculty makes sure each resident has enough candidate patients to start with, each of which are closely followed up by both resident and assigned faculty. A lecture on superimposition is given at the end of the second year of residency. In the third year, as a part of graduation requirement, a mock board exam is given. Each case is critically reviewed, and the residents gain the experience on case write-ups, and treatment plans, etc.

Medical University of South Carolina

To prepare residents for the exam, the College of the Dental Medicine program requires that all patient model records are given a DI score and graded to ABO standards. Residents participate in diagnosis and treatment planning in the ABO Clinical Examination format quarterly to become familiar with the process. The first-year clinical competency assessment consists of completing records and diagnosis in ABO format (ten cases). The second-year clinical competency assessment consists of records, diagnosis, treatment planning, and evaluation of treatment progress in the ABO format (ten cases.) The second-year didactic competency assessment is successfully challenging the ABO Written Examination. Students are given a formal course in board article preparation.

The third-year clinical competency assessment consists of records, diagnosis, treatment planning, completion of treatment with records, and evaluation of treatment results in ABO

format with ABO scoring on the models. Third-year residents present a case at the CDABO Case Display at AAO Annual Session and present six cases in ABO format on their final day in the residency after the guest lecture that morning.

Seton Hill University for Orthodontics

"We started a unique program at Seton Hill to enhance the ability of our residents to become ABO certified," says Dan Rinchuse, DMD, MS, MDS, PhD, Professor and Program Director of the Graduate Program in Orthodontics. "Our program is 30 months, but we developed an 'ABO Case Completion Course' which is free for our new graduates that allows them to return as needed for eight more months to complete their resident board cases. So this gives them 38 months to work on board cases. This has been embraced by our residents."

St. Barnabas Hospital / Union Community Health Center

Starting from the first year, all case presentations are written up and discussed in the ABO format with an emphasis on diagnosis, problem list, skeletal and dental treatment objectives and treatment plan. Second year residents have a specific course in ABO review where required articles and textbooks from the ABO reading list are reviewed and discussed in detail. The third year residents undergo a challenging "mock ABO exam" as a graduation requirement. Each resident must work up and present four cases as if they were presenting to ABO examiners. ABO quality records, diagnosis and treatment are required for every case started in the clinic. The program treats every case as if it were a board case.

Temple University Kornberg School of Dentistry

Because the Department of Orthodontics' program is only 26 months long, the shorter timeline can be a roadblock for residents to complete the six cases required to become certified. "This year (2015) we have allowed the graduating class to be appointed as volunteer adjunct faculty which enables them to come back to the clinic to complete the treatment on their patients," says Jeffrey H. Godel, D.D.S., Associate Professor and Chair, Post-Graduate Program Director. "This is our first year trying this. I will have a better idea of the outcomes in the next couple of years," he says.

University of Detroit Mercy

In an effort to support attainment of ABO certification shortly after graduation, the University of Detroit Mercy has restructured the way it takes patient records, and makes assignments of these individuals to incoming residents. Part of that restructuring process has required that new patients are examined and their records are taken three months prior to the beginning of the new class. Because new patients are not accepted throughout the two years of the program, the program is able to start all patients in the first few months of the new residents' program, which offers the opportunity for students to finish more cases.

"The residents are so far in debt that the universal comment made by all is, 'Money is so tight any help we can get would be most appreciated,'" says Richard Kulbersh, DMD, MS Professor at the University of Detroit Mercy. To help cover the costs, the program offers a full reimbursement for the cost of the Clinical Examination for any resident that submits all six required ABO cases and has a minimum of three accepted to be banked.

University of Iowa

Tom Southard, MS, DDS, MS, Professor and Head of the Department of Orthodontics says all

orthodontic programs need a chairman who is passionate about the value of the board, and dedicated faculty to accompany and instruct residents on how to master the exams. "I look upon the board as an educational experience," he says.

The program makes certification optional, although close to 90 percent of residents opt in. Dr. Southard names two faculty, Steve Marshall, DDS, MS and Clay Parks, DDS, MS as instrumental in taking the lead to oversee the program's residents through the certification process, including individual instruction in the identification of potential ABO-qualifying cases, preparatory exercises for the Clinical and Written Exams, and a mock board exam.

"I've read that 70 percent of what you're ever going to learn as an orthodontist you will learn during your residency. I think another 10 percent of what you will ever learn you will learn while preparing for the board."

University of Michigan

The University of Michigan, Department of Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry reports a 100 percent board certification rate for its Class of 2013 and 2014. "From the moment of orientation for the incoming class, becoming a diplomate of the ABO is presented as the gold standard of excellence for the orthodontic profession. All study models as part of patient records are given a DI score and graded to ABO standards," says Hera Kim-Berman, DDS, MMSc, Program Director, Graduate Orthodontics.

Students prepare three cases for mock Clinical Examinations and take the board case oral examination (BCOE) in front of a mock board to prepare for the actual exam. Each graduate student as well as alumni interested in taking the Clinical Examination prepares six to eight cases for the exam, which are individually reviewed with a faculty mentor.

The hard work pays off: Dr. Kim-Berman says most residents are happy to have taken the exam. Because they are so familiar with the test and well equipped through training exercises, most see it as a positive opportunity to showcase their skills and a valuable learning experience rather than a cause for anxiety.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

"I tell our residents that (board certification) is the most important thing they can do in their professional careers as it sets the stage for a lifetime of values, behaviors, critical self-assessment and continued excellence," says James Mah, DDS, MS, DMSc, Director of Advanced Education Program in Orthodontics.

The UNLV School of Dental Medicine program embraces the ABO process by familiarizing residents with the ABO format in all case conferences, keeping a full-time faculty of diplomates of the ABO. Initiatives include requiring the written component of the board exam for graduation, allocating curricular time to read literature and prepare for the Written Exam, and requiring residents to prepare and present six finished cases to faculty using ABO format prior

to graduation, among other practices. The Orthodontics-MSc program has had a 100 percent pass rate on the Written Exam.

University of Tennessee

As of 2015, the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Tennessee (UT) Health Science Center College of Dentistry has a reimbursement program in place. The department will now reimburse the graduates for the Clinical Examination if they take it at the first opportunity. However, instead of using a foundation to fund this program, the department has allocated part of the residents' tuition fees for this purpose.

The UT program, which is 34 months, graduates four residents a year. By the time the UT residents graduate, they have 20 cases written up to board specifications. "We set the bar for them to pass," says Holland Maness, DMD, an associate professor. "We want them to take all six cases from residency."

All four graduates took the Clinical Examination in September, and this program has been offered to the class of 2016. "As long as they (the recent graduates) follow through, it is a win for everyone – a win for them and a win for the department," Dr. Maness said. "I think the residents are all interested in becoming board certified. This just provides an easy road map for them."

University of the Pacific

Heesoo Oh, DDS, MS, PhD, MSD, an Associate Professor of Orthodontics at the University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry (Dugoni School), has been instrumental in creating a supportive financial and mentoring program for the orthodontic residents. For the past two years, the department has paid the residents' Clinical Examination fees.

The Dugoni School graduate orthodontic program is 27 months, and eight residents graduate each year. Because the orthodontic residents have a shorter timeline to collect their cases, Dr. Oh ensures a mentoring system is in place. She regularly meets with the residents to review cases and to determine their progress in selecting cases that will qualify for board certification.

"I am very confident that (the residents) are excellent clinicians and competent when they graduate," said Dr. Oh, who believes it is quite possible for the Dugoni School residents to achieve board certification within the timeframe of the program. "I don't feel like I need to increase the program's length. We only need to make more effort to make it (board certification) happen. In a 24- to 27-month program, a system needs to be implemented. Structural assistance needs to be in place. We are now collecting more cases before the residents start. Our departmental effort has been very successful. All of the eight graduates of the Class of 2013 became board certified. The residents are very motivated. They know this is the way to go."

University of Washington

The graduate orthodontic program at the University of Washington School of Dentistry started a reimbursement program for the Clinical Examination in 2014. Graduates who take the Clinical Examination at the first opportunity after graduation will be fully reimbursed. If they take the next examination, the department covers half the fee. "I just know that these students are

stretched pretty thin,” said Greg Huang, DMD, MSH, MPH, Professor and Chair of the Department of Orthodontics. “If they have the cases ready, we would like to find a way to help them take it.”

Four of the five residents who graduated in December 2014 took the exam in February 2015, and the fifth graduate took the exam in September 2015. Because the department recently lengthened the program from 30 months to 33 months, the next eligible class will graduate in March 2016. “It certainly seemed to increase the number of participants,” Dr. Huang said. “We are seeing that they are motivated.”

West Virginia University Department of Orthodontics

For the past 18 years, West Virginia University Department of Orthodontics has required each graduating third-year resident to pass the mock ABO examination as part of their requirements for graduation. Each resident is required to put together six cases in ABO format and defend in front of a group of three board certified examiners. Residents can enter these cases to seek the actual board certification upon graduation.

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Founded in 1929 as the first specialty board in dentistry, The American Board of Orthodontics (ABO) is the only orthodontic specialty board recognized by the American Dental Association and in affiliation with the American Association of Orthodontists.

The ABO sets the standard for the highest level of patient care and promotes excellence in orthodontics for all of its certified orthodontists. As a specialty board, we serve to protect the orthodontic specialty and encourage orthodontists to achieve certification, demonstrating their commitment to lifelong learning and excellent care.

As advocates for the orthodontic specialty, The American Board of Orthodontics is a resource for orthodontists, orthodontic residents, as well as anyone looking for the best in orthodontic care.