



ABEM History 1960–2010

In the early 1960s, the United States public began to demand improved quality of care in hospital emergency departments. In response, hospitals developed full-time emergency services. As a result, a number of physicians began developing the training and practice of EM. To support this growing physician group, new organizations formed, such as the ACEP and the University Association for Emergency Medical Services (UA/EMS), which is now the SAEM.

In the early 1970s, ACEP members developed the Committee on Board Establishment (COBE). The Committee began the arduous process of setting forth the standards for credentials and certification in EM.

In 1976, ABEM submitted an application to ABMS seeking primary board status. The AMA Council on Medical Education approved this recommendation, but the ABMS defeated it. At the suggestion of various ABMS members, representatives from other specialty boards held a lengthy series of discussions from which a recommendation emerged for a second application, this time seeking approval for a conjoint board (modified). The AMA Council on Medical Education and the ABMS approved this application.

In September 1979, EM became the 23rd recognized medical specialty. ABEM offered the first EM certification examinations in 1980 and certified its first diplomates in that year.

On September 21, 1989, the ABMS Assembly voted unanimously to approve the ABEM application for conversion to primary board status.

On June 12, 1993, ABEM dedicated a new headquarters building in East Lansing, Michigan. The building is a unique design and represents the Board's dedication to quality and high standards.

In June 1994, ABEM initiated the LSEP and recruited 1,008 emergency physicians to be lifetime participants. The study gathers information on professional interests, attitudes, and goals; training, certification, and licensing; professional experience; well-being and leisure activities; and demographic information. In 1996, ABEM initiated the ABEM LSEMR.

In February 1999, ABEM and ABIM approved guidelines for a six-year combined training program that, upon completion, provides physicians the option for triple certification in EM, Internal Medicine, and CCM.

In December 1999, after 20 years of service to ABEM, Benson S. Munger, Ph.D., retired his position as the first ABEM Executive Director. In March 2000, Mary Ann Reinhart, Ph.D., was selected as the new ABEM Executive Director.

The following ABEM subspecialties were approved in the 1990s: Pediatric Emergency Medicine, Sports Medicine, and Medical Toxicology.

In 2002, ABEM completed an extensive renovation of its headquarters building in East Lansing, Michigan, incorporating all building space for ABEM use.

In 2003, ABEM and ABIM approved the first six-year combined training program for EM/IM/CCM.

On April 5, 2004, diplomates were granted access to EMCC Online, the interactive EMCC portion of the ABEM website that provides ABEM diplomates access to a secure, personal homepage where they can track their status within the EMCC program.

In 2005, ABEM administered the last paper-and-pencil written certification examination and for the first time began development of a computer-delivered examination to be administered in testing centers in November 2006. The name of the “written” certification examination was changed to “qualifying” examination, a label that reflects its essential purpose in the certification process.

The following ABEM subspecialties were approved in the 2000s: Undersea and Hyperbaric Medicine and Hospice and Palliative Medicine.

On March 31, 2010, after almost 23 years of service to ABEM, Mary Ann Reinhart, Ph.D., retired her position as the second ABEM Executive Director. On May 1, 2010, Earl J. Reisdorff, M.D., was selected as the new ABEM Executive Director.

In September 2012, the Emergency Medicine Milestones were approved. The EM Milestones are a matrix of the knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and experiences that should be acquired at different points during EM training.

In September 2014, ABEM marked the 35th anniversary of Emergency Medicine’s recognition as a medical specialty.

The following ABEM subspecialties were approved in the 2010s: Anesthesiology Critical Care Medicine, Emergency Medical Services, Internal Medicine-Critical Care Medicine, and Pain Medicine.