

NBHMDC Receives Start-Up Funding from AAHPM; Names Organizing Board

At its November 2011 meeting, AAHPM's board of directors approved start-up funding (in the form of a grant) to the National Board for Hospice Medical Director Certification (NBHMDC). Hospice medical director (HMD) certification arose as a concept not long after hospice and palliative medicine specialty board certification became a reality. The intention is to complement hospice and palliative medicine specialty board certification, because the knowledge base and competencies of hospice medical direction represent a unique subset of hospice and palliative medicine that may not be fully covered in broader hospice and palliative medicine training.

HMDs represent a diverse group with many backgrounds who have often followed varied career paths on their way toward working with hospices. Many HMDs are physicians who may be unable to or may choose not to follow a pathway to full hospice and palliative medicine specialty board certification but do desire formal recognition.

Creating an Organizing Board

The first step in creating such an independent organization is forming an organizing board that will oversee development of bylaws and articles of incorporation, develop a financial operating plan, contract for administrative services, perform groundwork for HMD certification requirements, and choose a final board in accord with the new bylaws and certification recognition requirements.

AAHPM has a vested interest in ensuring the successful launch of the HMD certification, which is viewed as a need by many members. Recognizing this, AAHPM has pledged considerable financial support to the creation of the NBHMDC. However, to ensure full and complete recognition of the HMD certification, the NBHMDC must be an entity that is operationally independent and separate from related organizations, including AAHPM. With the formation of the organizing board, NBHMDC is fully independent from AAHPM.

A broad call for nominations resulted in 25 candidates, all with excellent credentials, being considered for the organizing board. Nominees completed an application, which provided a baseline set of data with which to evaluate candidates. The application process required at least two recommendations by colleagues.

Each application was reviewed by at least two AAHPM members, including volunteers from the Medical Director

Education Committee, from which general rankings of each candidate's various qualifications were generated. Feedback and candidate rankings were collated by staff. This information and final input from senior staff formed the basis for choosing the slate of final organizing board candidates.

Points considered in this process, to name just a few, included experience as a hospice medical director, evidence of involvement with formal HMD education (eg, AAHPM's HMD course, publications), geographical diversity, representation of varied hospice organizational types and settings (eg, tax status of organization, size of organization, academic affiliations), diversity in career pathway (eg, primary board certification, or lack thereof), and evidence of leadership and recognition within HPM.

Although it is anticipated that the final board will be larger, limiting the size of the organizing board is prudent during the initial organizing process.

Candidates Appointed to Organizing Board

The following candidates were approved by the AAHPM Board of Directors to be members of the NBHMDC organizing board.

- Gail Austin Cooney, MD FAAHPM, Chair
- Kimberly A. Bower, MD
- Bruce H. Chamberlain, MD FACP FAAHPM
- John F. Manfredonia, DO FACFP FAAHPM
- David M. McGrew, MD FAAHPM
- Brian W. Murphy, MD MBA
- Tanya L. Stewart, MD FAAHPM

Sally Weir, AAHPM's director of program development and operations, was appointed as executive director for NBHMDC. Her transition from AAHPM to NBHMDC will be complete by the end of March. Sally will continue to staff the fellowship grant program through 2012.

The new board's first meeting took place in February 2012. Later this year, the board will review proposals from potential testing vendors and work with the selected vendor to develop the certification process based on the competency and assessment recommendations of the Medical Director Education Committee, with the goal to begin certifying HMDs in late 2013.