

# Diplomate News

20600 Eureka Road, Suite 600  
Taylor, MI 48180  
Phone: (734) 282-9400 \* Fax: (734) 282-9402  
E-Mail: [abcrsadmin@abcrs.org](mailto:abcrsadmin@abcrs.org)

DECEMBER 2021

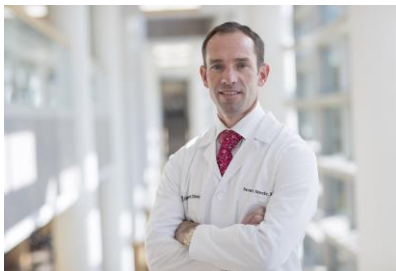
## *Bruce G. Wolff, MD, Executive Director*



It was truly inspiring to see how members of our specialty came together to overcome considerable adversity and to complete the mission of the Board over the past 18 months. The efforts of Scott Steele, Glenn Ault, our sixteen board members, examiners, question writers, and especially our stellar ABCRS office staff made this possible. Not to mention the patience and understanding of the certification candidate group. We still have challenges ahead, but there is no doubt that we will have capable leadership to meet them.

I also want to welcome Dr. Thomas Read, who has been selected by the board as the Associate Executive Director. As you know, Tom is currently president of the ASCRS, and thus brings a wealth of perspective with matters within our specialty. He will succeed me as Executive Director next fall.

## *Scott R. Steele, MD, President*



Greetings fellow Diplomates! This is the first of what I hope to be a few newsletters over the next year to keep everyone up to date on what is happening at the Board and within the various sections. I am honored to serve as the President of the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery for this upcoming year. We communicate frequently with the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, the Association of Program Directors for Colon and Rectal Surgery, the Residency Review Committee for Colon and Rectal Surgery and within the global leadership of the American Board of

Medical Specialties to ensure relevancy and bolster our programs that meet the needs of those we serve. As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, the challenges that we face both in training and certification remain, though I feel we as a Board are well positioned to not only overcome them, but also to proactively implement policies and programs to improve efficiencies and decrease the burden of work on our Diplomates. Over the last year, despite some difficulties, we were able to successfully complete the written and certifying examinations for Candidate year groups 2020 and 2021. The lessons learned from the transition to the online certifying examination were incredibly valuable and we sincerely appreciate the understanding and support from our Candidates and Diplomates alike. For those of you who missed it, I encourage you to [read our communication](#) that details the issues we encountered with the initial fall certifying examination. I would also like to publicly acknowledge my sincere appreciation to our many Examiners and Committee Members for providing additional questions and volunteering their time to serve as an Examiner.

One of the most common questions I have been asked is whether we will be continuing with the virtual certifying examinations, recognizing that in a few circumstances other specialty boards have stated they will resume in-person examinations. While it has yet to be definitively determined, it is clear from surveys that most Candidates and many of the Examiners prefer the virtual platform. This may be a foreign concept for some of you reading this newsletter, as vivid memories of walking into three hotel rooms and sitting across from two examiners is forever seared into your mind. However, rest assured that I have been told that the same butterflies and sweaty palms exist as Candidates move virtually from room to room.

Our maintenance of certification process (MOC) has made a successful transition to continuous certification and almost all Diplomates have enrolled in the on-line Continuing Certification assessment called CertLink™. This has now replaced the traditional ten-year examination and requires participation to remain in compliance and certified. The program provides a comprehensive evaluation of all the pillars of colorectal surgery along with individual critiques of the answers and select references for further information on the topic. It is critically important for all Diplomates to

participate in this program and any questions should be directed to the Board.

I would like to give a special thanks to Past-President Glenn Ault, MD, and Executive Director Bruce Wolff, MD, for guiding us through these tumultuous times and providing dedicated and strong leadership in such a visionary and transparent manner. Further, we welcome in our new Associate Executive Director Thomas Read, MD, who will be transitioning to the Executive Director position in October 2022. Please refer to Dr. Read's bio sketch located in this newsletter for his background. Finally, our mission at the Board is to serve and advocate for our trainees, Diplomates and, most importantly, our patients. The Board members are all aligned to provide a seamless and transparent initial certification and continuing certification process and to help ensure the competence of future colorectal surgeons. We have an experienced and committed administrative and support team and are here to help you in any way we can. Please do not hesitate to reach out and thank you for all you do.

BOARD CERTIFIED COLON AND RECTAL SURGEONS As of November 30, 2021						
TOTAL DIPLOMATES - 2729	MALE	%	FEMALE	%	ALL	%
Active U.S.	1436	52.62	551	20.19	1987	72.81
Active International	210	7.70	54	1.98	264	9.67
Retired U.S.	366	13.41	17	0.62	383	14.03
Retired International	23	0.84	1	0.04	24	0.88
Revoked/Expired	57	2.09	14	0.51	71	2.60
Total	2092	76.66	637	23.34	2729	100

## *Thomas E. Read, MD, Associate Executive Director*



I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Associate Executive Director of the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery. I believe the Board is the heart and soul of our specialty, and has allowed colon and rectal surgery to thrive and remain independent. With independence comes responsibility, and the directors and staff of the Board have shouldered that responsibility with aplomb, inspiring confidence in both our diplomates and the public that ABCRS certification has value.

My passion for the work of ABCRS derives from my love of the specialty, respect and admiration for my colleagues, concern for the welfare of patients suffering from colorectal disease, and desire to continually improve the certification process. I will dedicate myself to assisting the Board of Directors and ABCRS staff in their efforts to maintain and improve the value of ABCRS certification to surgical trainees, our diplomates, and most importantly, the public.

I welcome the opportunity to learn from Bruce Wolff, the current Executive Director of ABCRS, during the transition period. Dr. Wolff and his predecessors have done a spectacular job ensuring that ABCRS certification is a coveted achievement, and have helped usher in the *golden age* of colon and rectal surgery. I will do my best to live up to the high standard they have set.

Thomas E. Read, MD, FACS, FASCRS serves as the Cracchiolo Family Professor and Chief, Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery, University of Florida College of Medicine. Dr. Read received his B.A. from Harvard University and M.D. from the University of California San Francisco, where he completed a residency in general surgery and basic science research fellowship. Dr. Read completed a residency in colon and rectal surgery at the Lahey Clinic.

Dr. Read maintains a busy clinical practice, with a focus on rectal cancer and reoperative pelvic surgery. Dr. Read's research interests have focused on preventing and treating colorectal cancer, improving outcomes following colectomy, and using minimally invasive techniques to manage colorectal disease. He has a keen interest in education and has served as Coursemaster for medical student surgical education, Program Director for two colorectal residencies, and ACGME Designated Institutional Official.

Dr. Read has served as Co-Editor of *Diseases of the Colon and Rectum* and currently serves as the colorectal Associate Editor for *Annals of Surgery*, Editor-in-Chief of *Seminars in Colon and Rectal Surgery*, and Co-Editor of the *American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons Textbook of Colon and Rectal Surgery*.

Dr. Read has served in a variety of leadership roles for organizations that represent his specialty, including as President, and Examination Chair, of the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery and Governor to the American College of Surgeons. He currently serves as President of the American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons.

## *M. Shane McNevin, MD*

### *Written Examination Chair*



The ABCRS Written Examination committee continues with efforts to safely examine our candidates given COVID restrictions, maintain and refine a large database of questions and support our question writing groups as they endeavor to write questions that reflect current colorectal surgical practice.

We have continued with remote testing through the Pearson VUE center and despite social distancing have been able to offer testing to all of our candidates with only a very few people having to travel outside their local region. We really anticipate no significant disruption of our ability to offer the written examination moving forward.

Our question writing groups are the core of our mission during the year. We offer a question writing seminar yearly at the ASCRS meeting and are doing our best to provide an opportunity to all those who are interested in writing questions to participate in the process. Based on database review and the Board's goals, the topics for our question writers are assigned in the fall and completed by the turn of the calendar year. All of the questions are reviewed at the group level with the Written Examination chair and then reviewed at the spring ABCRS meeting by the Written Examination committee before adding to the database. The board has recognized the importance

of diversity, equity and inclusion and questions pertaining to outcomes based on race and socioeconomic factors as well as questions specific to the LGBTQ community have been developed and included in the examination of our candidates.

The Written Examination committee also throughout the year exhaustively reviews the question database comprised of more than 1300 questions to ensure the questions remain relevant and in keeping with the current practice of colorectal surgery. We also work with the Oral Examination and Continuing Certification committees to share questions and help ensure the quality of those testing processes as well.

We all look forward to continuing to serve the Board and diplomates and provide a product that defines the knowledge of a colorectal surgeon.

#### **WRITTEN EXAM COMMITTEE**

**M. Shane McNevin, MD**  
**Chair**

##### **Board Members**

*David Beck, MD*  
*Neil Hyman, MD*  
*Ann Lowry, MD*  
*Nancy Morin, MD*

##### **Non-Board Members**

*Charles Friel, MD*  
*Michael Snyder, MD*

#### **Question Writing:**

Do You Know How to Write the  
Perfect Exam Question?

**Wednesday, May 4, 2022, 7:00 – 10:00 am**  
**ASCRS Annual Scientific Meeting**  
Tampa, Florida

#### **Next ABCRS Written Exam**

**Wednesday, March 9, 2022**  
**Pearson VUE Testing Centers**

## *Matthew G. Mutch, MD, Oral Examination Chair*



After delaying the 2020 oral examination due to COVID, the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery certifying exam is back in business. The impact of COVID has been significant for all the Board members, Diplomats and Candidates. The Board hopes everyone

is safe and healthy, and we greatly appreciate your continued support over the last year and a half.

In April 2021, the oral exam was administered on a virtual platform with great success. As a result of the never-ending support of our Board members, examiners, staff, and leadership of Oral Exam Chair Scott Steele, two separate exams were developed. We examined all eligible 2020 candidates over two days, which included 102 candidates. The virtual exam consisted of a secure platform to house the exam that was merged with Zoom to allow a seamless interaction between the candidates and examiners.

Understanding the potential need to rely on a virtual environment for the future, we sought feedback from all of the candidates and examiners from the April exams. This information has allowed us to better understand the needs required to provide a quality and fair exam. We developed a fully integrated video and exam platform for the September 2021 Certifying Exam. Unfortunately, technical difficulties were encountered that crashed

the platform and the exam was cancelled. This was devastating for everyone involved and impacted 110 candidates. Oral Exam Chair, Scott Steele, personally called every candidate registered for that exam to explain the events and ensure them that the Board would provide an alternate exam as soon as possible.

All candidates were given the opportunity take the exam on October 9<sup>th</sup>, November 13<sup>th</sup> or defer until September 2022. To administer the exams in October and November, two brand new exams were written, and we had to secure enough examiners on short notice. Both exams were successfully completed. The members of the Oral exam committee, examiners, and the ABCRS staff are amazing as without their commitment and hard work, none of this would have been possible.

At least in the near future, we expect the exam to remain on a virtual platform. Our goal for the upcoming year is to identify or develop a secure, integrated virtual platform to administer the Certifying Exam. We will continue to develop and refine exam questions that will test the candidate's practical knowledge of the Colon and Rectal Surgery.

### **Save the Date!**

ABCRS REMOTE Oral Exam

**Saturday, September 10, 2022**

More information to follow.

### **ORAL EXAM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Matthew Mutch, MD  
Chair**

#### **Board Members**

*Rebecca Hoedema, MD  
Michelle Murday, MD  
H. David Vargas, MD*

#### **Non-Board Members**

*Kellie Mathis, MD  
Matthew Kalady, MD*



## *W. Brian Perry, MD, Continuing Certification Chair*



To serve our diplomates better, in 2017 the American Board of Colon and Rectal Surgery (ABCRS) began the transition from an every 10-year recertification examination given at commercial testing centers to a 5-year cycle of an on-line assessment using the CertLink™ platform. Diplomates receive 10-16 questions per quarter, including “clones” of questions that were previously answered incorrectly. The cycle for the other parts of Continuing Certification – professional standing, life-long learning (CME), and evaluation of performance in practice was lengthened from 3 to 5 years, and in 2018, the fee structure was modified. Overall, this results in a net savings for diplomates in costs and time as the testing center fees have been eliminated in addition to avoiding a short period of intense study and time away from practice and personal life. On recent surveys, over 90% prefer the continuing certification model over the every 10-year exam.

Diplomates have 5 years to complete 16 quarters (4 years) of questions, which would allow for up to 4 quarters to be deferred. This has been used by many during the COVID pandemic. An email request to the ABCRS is sufficient to defer, but it must be received before the end of the active quarter. Unfortunately, the CertLink system does not allow for a quarter to be deferred after that quarter ends.

Effective July 1, 2020, ABCRS began offering up to 10 AMA PRA Category 1 CME Credits™ per year (40 total credits over a 5-year period) for successfully completing the Quarterly CertLink Assessment. These [AMA PRA Category 1 CME Credits™](#) are in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Accreditation

Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) through a joint providership with ASCRS. Credits are awarded annually by completing the Course Evaluation that is sent out from the Board the next January via email ([certlink@abcrs.org](mailto:certlink@abcrs.org)) titled “CME Hours for CertLink™ Participation.”

The CertLink system allows for diplomates to critique individual questions. While it is not possible to respond personally to each submission, the Continuing Certification Committee (CCC) reviews each one and uses this feedback to improve current questions and aid in the creation of future questions. Please keep these critiques professional.

To help stay up to date on current literature, article-based assessment (ABA) was added in July 2020 alternating every other quarter with the standard knowledge-based multiple-choice questions. Each quarter there will be 10-12 clinical questions based on the articles. The initial sets of articles are being drawn from the Clinical Practice Guidelines found in Diseases of the Colon and Rectum. The ABCRS is working with other journals to expand the pool of possible choices. Feedback has shown the article-based assessment to be well received.

ABCRS invests much energy toward increasing the value of Continuing Certification. ABCRS Board members have taken key roles in national efforts to reshape Continuing Certification requirements and timelines. Your Board’s goal is to maintain a process that respects our diplomates’ clinical and personal time pressures, can swiftly include updated information or new technologies, and better reflects diplomates’ current practice profiles for improved relevance.

My profound thanks to the Continuing Certification Committee and all of our question writers for helping to make this transition a success.

## **CONTINUING CERTIFICATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**W. Brian Perry, MD**  
**Chair**

**Najjia Mahmoud, MD**  
**Senior Advisor**

**Board Members**  
*Jennifer Beaty, MD*  
*Harry Papaconstantinou, MD*  
*Eric Weiss, MD*

**Non-Board Members**  
*Ronald Gagliano, MD*  
*Brian Kann, MD*

## **ARE YOU UPDATE ON YOUR CONTINUING CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS?**

Be sure to log into the [ABCRS portal](#) to check your Continuing Certification Status/Profile.

The ABCRS website is available 24/7 to Diplomates. You can update your profile, review and document your Continuing Certification requirements, print an invoice and pay your annual fees by viewing the Financial tab.

Email is the primary communication vehicle used; therefore, it is important to review your ABCRS account and update your profile at least once a year.

Questions? Contact Sherry Whitenburg at [shwhitenburg@abcrs.org](mailto:shwhitenburg@abcrs.org).

## ***Continuing Certification Requirements***

- **Part I, II, and IV** – Completion by December 31 in the last year of five-year cycle.
- **Part III** - CertLink™ Quarterly Assessment during the five-year cycle
- **Annual Fee** - Due by December 31

### **Part I – Professional Standing**

The following documentation must be completed every five years:

- 1.) **Verification of Full Licensure** - Submit a copy of your medical license to the board office.
- 2.) **Chief of Staff Evaluation and Documentation of Hospital Privileges** – The combined form is located inside of your Continuing Certification Profile. Print, and have your Chief of Staff or Chief of Surgery sign and submit to the Board office.

### **Part II – Life-Long Learning & Self-Assessment**

Diplomates participating in CertLink™ can earn up to **10 AMA PRA Category 1 CME Credits™** per year (40 total credits over a 5 year period) with a passing score of 70%. The current Continuing Certification requirement of 90 Category 1 CME credits is now **40 Category 1 CME Credits every five years with no self-assessment required.** Visit [CertLink CMEs](#) for additional information.

Requirements for Diplomates not yet enrolled in CertLink™ are completion of 90 Category 1 CME Credits and 50 of the 90 *AMA PRA Category 1 CME Credits™* must include self-assessment.

### **Part III - Longitudinal Assessment (CertLink™)**

Diplomates are required to **answer quarterly questions** delivered through the CertLink™ platform. The program has been designed to assess the diplomate's knowledge in all phases of colon and rectal surgery. Please see the detailed explanation of rolling enrollment in CertLink™ in the [Continuous Certification section](#) of the [ABCRS website](#).

### **Part IV – Evaluation of Performance in Practice**

Ongoing participation in a local, regional or national outcomes registry or quality assessment program is required. Diplomates are expected to regularly review their outcomes and complication rates, address identified weaknesses, and reassess the results. The Part IV activity should be related to your current practice.

### **Annual Fee \$500**

The \$500 (U.S.) annual fee is required for all Diplomates participating in the ABCRS Continuing Certification process and must be paid by December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

**Diplomates are required to complete all steps to be considered “Meeting Continuing Certification Requirements”.**

## *Meet the Board Staff*



### **Jan Wisniewski – Executive Assistant/Office Manager**

Jan's primary responsibilities include supporting the Executive Director and the Board Members as well as overseeing the Board office staff. Jan also serves as the liaison with affiliated organizations and medical groups such as ABMS. Jan coordinates the ABCRS Board meetings, oral exams as well as the annual APDCRS and Michigan Society meetings and manages all aspects of the business operations for ABCRS. Jan joined ABCRS in December 2018 and brings more than 30 years of experience working with non-profit boards ranging from health care to human

services organizations. Michigan.



### **Crystal Jacobs – Examination Coordinator**

Crystal Jacobs' primary responsibility is coordinating exam development activities for the Written, Oral, Continuing Certification and In-Training examinations. This involves participation in the development of examination items, including editing, reviewing, item banking and maintenance of the item pool. Crystal collaborates with all exam chairs and communicates assignments to committee members and question writers. Crystal also works closely with the Program Directors and Coordinators for the APDCRS. Crystal came to ABCRS with 17 years of experience working with medical care teams that include hospitals and Hospice/Palliative care. Some fun facts

about Crystal are that she loves peppermint mocha coffee, mini golden doodle puppies, and learning new words to expand her vocabulary.



### **Sherry Whitenburg – Continuing Certification Coordinator**

Sherry joined ABCRS as a permanent employee in September 2018 as the Administrative Assistant and assumed the role of Continuing Certification Coordinator in the summer of 2019. Sherry coordinates overall policy implementation of the Continuing Certification program including CertLink™. Sherry studied Sociology at the University of Toledo and enjoys spending time with her family, vacationing in warmer climates, and sewing. Sherry also works as a stock car racing official on weekends during the summer months.



### **Tia Williams – Administrative Assistant/Credentials Coordinator**

Tia is the newest member of the team and joined ABCRS in January 2020. Tia is the main contact for candidates applying for board certification. Tia reviews and documents required application materials from candidates. She also communicates registration and scheduling process to candidates. Tia also works closely with program directors and coordinators to convey ABCRS residency instructions and timelines. Tia records, deposits and reconciles all payments for application, exam and annual fees for ABCRS, APDCRS and MSCRS. Tia enjoys Michigan's four seasons ~ the fall coloring leaves, snowy winters, bike rides in the spring and beaches in the summer.



## MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

**Scott R. Steele, M.D.**

*President*  
Cleveland, Ohio

**David E. Beck, M.D.**

*President-Elect*  
Nashville, Tennessee

**Bruce G. Wolff, M.D.**

*Executive Director*  
Rochester, Minnesota

**Thomas E. Read, M.D.**

*Associate Executive Director*  
Gainesville, Florida

**Jennifer S. Beaty, M.D.**

Des Moines, Iowa

**Rebecca E. Hoedema, M.D.**

Grand Rapids, Michigan

**Neil Hyman, M.D.**

Chicago, Illinois

**Ann C. Lowry, M.D.**

St. Paul, Minnesota

**M. Shane McNevin, M.D.**

Spokane, Washington

**Nancy A. Morin, M.D.**

Montreal, QC Canada

**Michelle E. Murday, M.D.**

Salt Lake City, Utah

**Matthew G. Mutch, M.D.**

St. Louis, Missouri

**M. Timothy Nelson, M.D.**

Tulsa, Oklahoma

**Harry T. Papaconstantinou, M.D.**

Temple, Texas

**W. Brian Perry, M.D.**

San Antonio, Texas

**H. David Vargas, M.D.**

New Orleans, Louisiana

**Eric G. Weiss, M.D.**

Weston, Florida

**David J. Schoetz, Jr., M.D.**

*Senior Advisor of the Board*  
Burlington, Massachusetts

## ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Glenn T. Ault, M.D.**

Los Angeles, California

**Najjia N. Mahmoud, M.D.**

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Jan Rakinic, M.D.**

Springfield, Illinois

**Judith L. Trudel, M.D.**

Minneapolis, Minnesota

## Board Membership

*There are now 16 members in the following categories:*

- 6 ABCRS - American Board of Colon & Rectal Surgery
- 1 ABCRS - Executive Director
- 4 ASCRS - American Society of Colon & Rectal Surgeons
- 2 ACS - American College of Surgeons
- 1 ABS - American Board of Surgery
- 2 APDCRS - Association of Program Directors for Colon & Rectal Surgery

*Board members normally serve two four-year terms*



**20600 Eureka Road, Suite 600**

**Taylor, MI 48180**

**Phone: (734) 282-9400**

**Fax: (734) 282-9402**

**E-Mail: [abcrsadmin@abcrs.org](mailto:abcrsadmin@abcrs.org)**



*A Member of the*

**American Board  
of Medical Specialties**

*Higher standards. Better care.®*