



American Board of Addiction Medicine

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For Immediate Release

JOHN H. FULLERTON, MD CERTIFIED BY ADDICTION MEDICINE BOARD

American Board of Addiction Medicine to Address Significant, Unmet Need

Chevy Chase, Maryland – (April 2011) – John H. Fullerton, MD of Hampton Health, Ltd. in San Francisco, CA is among the just over 2,500 physicians in the United States certified by the American Board of Addiction Medicine (ABAM), an independent medical specialty board. ABAM recently certified addiction medicine physicians from several specialties, including emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, preventive medicine, psychiatry, neurology and surgery. ABAM sets standards for physician education, assesses physicians' knowledge, and requires and tracks life-long continuing education.

“We want addiction prevention, screening, intervention and treatment to become routine aspects of medical care, available virtually any place health care is provided,” said Kevin B. Kunz, MD, and President of the American Board of Addiction Medicine.

Although one in five Americans entering the health care system has a substance abuse problem, there has never been a medical specialty board, drawn from all areas of medicine, dedicated to certifying addiction specialists. Now, patients have a way to find specialized medical care for substance use disorders related to alcohol, tobacco and other addicting drugs, including some prescription medications.

“Physicians are often at a loss for what to do about substance use and addiction issues, and may even misdiagnose the problem,” said Kevin B. Kunz, MD, and President of the American Board of Addiction Medicine. “We hope to change this by creating a cadre of thousands of specialized physicians across medical specialties.”

Studies show that fewer than one in five physicians consider themselves adequately prepared to diagnose alcoholism or other drug use disorders. Physician training is sorely lacking. ABAM recently accredited 10 addiction medicine training programs affiliated with the nation's top medical schools, and will apply to the American Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) to accredit these programs. “The American Board of Addiction Medicine will provide assurance to the American public that Addiction Medicine physicians have the knowledge and skills to prevent, recognize and treat addiction,” said Dr. Kunz. “ABAM-certified physicians will also be able to address common medical or psychiatric conditions related to the use of addictive substances.”

John H. Fullerton, MD is a highly qualified specialist with Board Certifications in Internal Medicine (ABIM), Geriatrics (ABIM), Hospice & Palliative Medicine (ABHPM) and holds national certificates of added qualifications as a Certified Forensic Physician (ACFEI), Certified Medical Director (AMDA) and a Certified Home Care Physician (AAHCP).

Created in 2007, ABAM offers a rigorous certifying examination that was developed by an expert panel and the National Board of Medical Examiners, as well as a re-certification examination to ensure that ABAM- certified physicians maintain life-long competence in addiction medicine. ABAM has a governing body of 15 distinguished physicians from across a range of medical specialties, each of whom is certified by a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). ABAM is in the process of seeking recognition from ABMS, and plans to certify physicians in multiple specialties.

ABAM was created at a time of increasing promise for addiction treatment. Recent discoveries have added to the preponderance of evidence that addiction is a chronic disease of the brain, with unique vulnerabilities and pathology, and a predictable course if not interrupted by effective treatment. An increasing number of medically based addiction treatments have become available, and more are on the horizon. “Years of scientific research have proven drug addiction is a brain disease caused by biological, environmental and developmental factors—a disease which can have far reaching medical consequences. Given the proper training, tools, and resources, physicians can be the first line of defense against substance abuse and addiction—identifying drug use early, preventing its escalation to abuse and addiction, and referring patients in need to treatment,” said Nora D. Volkow, MD, and Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Congress passed legislation in 2009 addressing insurance discrimination against those with addictions, requiring that private insurance coverage of addiction treatment, when provided, is offered in the same way that all other medical and surgical coverage is provided. “Now that this barrier has been reduced, we want to make sure that evidence-based addiction treatment is available to all who need it,” said Dr. Kunz.

For more information, including details on the ABAM Certification Exam, please visit www.ABAM.net

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