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For Immediate Release

**NEW MEDICAL BOARD AIMS TO ASSURE QUALITY, INCREASE ACCESS
TO ADDICTION TREATMENT**

American Board of Addiction Medicine to Address Significant, Unmet Need

Chevy Chase, Maryland – April 27, 2009 – Although one in five Americans has an addictive disorder, there has never been a medical specialty, drawn from all areas of medicine, dedicated to treating addiction. Now, patients have somewhere to turn for specialized medical care for substance use disorders related alcohol, tobacco and other addicting drugs, including some prescription medications. The American Board of Addiction Medicine (ABAM), a new independent medical specialty board, has begun to certify addiction medicine physicians across a range of medical specialties. ABAM sets standards for physician education, assesses physicians' knowledge, and requires and tracks life-long continuing education.

“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, 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. Separate courses in Addiction Medicine are rarely taught in medical school, and there are no Addiction Medicine residencies among the 8,200 ACGME-accredited residency programs in the nation's hospitals.

“We want addiction prevention, screening, intervention and treatment to become routine aspects of medical care, available virtually any place health care is provided,” Dr. Kunz said.

ABAM certification will be given to physicians in Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Pediatrics, Emergency Medicine, Surgery, Preventive Medicine, Psychiatry, Neurology and other medical specialties, in order to make specialized addiction care available across the health care system. These physicians will need to complete the necessary accredited training and demonstrate that they are knowledgeable and competent in treating addiction.

“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.”

Created in 2007, with the assistance and encouragement of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, ABAM offers a rigorous certifying examination that was developed by an expert panel and the National Board of Medical Examiners, as well as a maintenance of certification examination to ensure that ABAM-certified physicians maintain life-long competence in Addiction Medicine. ABAM has formed 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 has also taken steps to create Addiction Medicine training programs affiliated with the nation’s top medical schools, and will apply to the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) to accredit these programs.

The new medical specialty board is being launched 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, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Congress recently passed legislation that ends insurance discrimination against those with addictions, requiring as of October 2009 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 eliminated, we want to make sure that evidence-based addiction treatment is available to all who need it,” said Dr. Kunz.

For more information, please visit www.ABAM.net