



American Board of Addiction Medicine
And
The ABAM Foundation



4601 North Park Ave., Suite 101, Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Contact: Dennis Tartaglia
(732) 545-1848

dtartaglia@tartagliacommunications.com

For Immediate Release

DIRECTORS OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF ADDICTION MEDICINE (ABAM)

AND

THE ABAM FOUNDATION APPOINT NEW EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

Chevy Chase, Maryland – December 4, 2012 – The Directors of the American Board of Addiction Medicine (ABAM) and The ABAM Foundation have appointed Kevin B. Kunz, MD, MPH, FASAM as their new Executive. Dr. Kunz will replace Dr. James Callahan who has served in this capacity from 2008 to the present. Dr. Kunz practices addiction medicine in Kona, Hawaii, and is Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Hawaii School of Medicine. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Preventive Medicine, and the American Board of Addiction Medicine. He served as ABAM and ABAM Foundation President (2008 to 2011), and as Specialty Director (Preventive Medicine) (2008 to the present), a position he will vacate when assuming his EVP responsibilities on January 1, 2013.

Dr. Kunz will collaborate with the Directors to promote the training and certification of an expanding number of physicians in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of addictive disorders.

ABAM is an independent specialty board, established in 2007. The ABAM Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, also established in 2007. Their missions are to train and certify the physicians of the future so that, at all points of entry to the health care system, patients and families will have access to treatment for addictive disorders and the medical and psychiatric consequences related to the use of alcohol, tobacco and other addicting drugs in physicians' offices, community clinics, emergency rooms, trauma centers, hospitals and other health care settings. ABAM and The ABAM Foundation are governed by 15 distinguished physicians from several medical specialties. Each of the Directors is certified by a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS).

An increasing number of physicians from many medical fields are specializing in addiction, and a formal training and certification pathway for them is essential. Currently, the only specialty training pathway in addictions that is approved by the ABMS is offered through addiction psychiatry, which is open only to

Phone: (301) 656-3378 • Facsimile: (301) 656-3815

E-mail: email@abam.net

psychiatrists. ABAM and The ABAM Foundation now provide a new pathway, and thus contribute to the improvement of the quality of care in the medical specialty of addiction medicine.

A key ABAM goal is ABMS recognition for addiction medicine, through collaboration with the ABMS and its member Boards. An equally important and necessary goal is to establish and accredit addiction medicine residency (fellowship) training programs in major teaching hospitals, community health centers and major health care systems, and to have the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredit the residency training programs presently accredited by The ABAM Foundation.

The ABAM Foundation accredited the first nine addiction medicine residencies in March 2011, and a tenth in March 2012. Seven residents graduated in 2012. Nine additional residencies have submitted applications for consideration for March 2013 accreditation.

“We want addiction prevention, screening, intervention and treatment to become routine aspects of medical care, available virtually any place health care is provided,” said Jeffrey H. Samet, MD, MA, MPH, President of ABAM and The ABAM Foundation, and Professor of Medicine and Chief, General Internal Medicine Section, Boston University School of Medicine.

Although one in five Americans entering the health care system has a substance abuse problem, 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 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 Dr. Samet. “We hope to change this by creating a cadre of specialized physicians across medical specialties.”

New health policies (especially the Affordable Care Act [ACA] and the Wellstone-Domenici Parity Act) and the increasing acceptance of addiction as a treatable medical condition will increase patient access to care and begin to attract physicians to the field.

Under the ACA, 30 million formerly uninsured Americans (including many in need of addiction treatment) will have health insurance.

Research continues to provide 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.

“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.

“Now that access to care and patient demand for care is increasing, we want to make sure that evidence-based addiction treatment is available to all who need it. And Dr. Kunz is uniquely qualified to lead us, given his years of dedicated practice specializing in addiction medicine,” said Dr. Samet.

For more information on ABAM and the ABAM 2010 Certification Examination, please visit www.ABAM.net.