January 27, 2016

Thomas J Nasca, MD, MACP
Chief Executive Officer
Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education
515 North State Street
Suite 2000
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Dear Dr. Nasca,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the process of reviewing the ACGME accreditation requirements for resident duty hours. Understanding that ABIM and ACGME have related, but distinct, roles in training requirements for internists and subspecialists vis-à-vis content of training requirements for individual physician initial certification eligibility and requirements for training program accreditation, respectively, and that the data of which we are aware do not demonstrate compelling evidence that duty hour requirements have adversely (or positively) affected individual physician competence as it relates to certification eligibility, ABIM will not at this time put forward an official organizational position on resident duty hours.

Personally, having studied this area and followed the literature around resident duty hours over the last decade and a half, I do note that if the evidence does not suggest that patient care nor physician competence are adversely affected by duty hour limits but the evidence does demonstrate hazards for residents due to fatigue both on duty (e.g. needlesticks) and off duty (e.g. automobile accidents), then it is difficult to argue for duty periods that a priori result in excess resident fatigue.

It is not clear to me that current duty hour limits mitigate fatigue as originally intended, in part because of the phenomenon of increased work intensity (i.e. shorter duty periods during which the resident is expected to do a similar amount of work as used to be done). Given this observation, systems of care and systems of education that occur within the care environment might well receive attention in addition to duty hour requirements. But I want to reiterate, these are my personal reflections and do not represent the official position of ABIM.
Regarding the Resident Duty Hours in the Learning and Working Environment Congress to be held in March 2016 in Chicago, Illinois, I would be delighted to attend and would look forward to both learning and participating in the process to move forward to the next generation of duty hour requirements.

Please do let me know if I may clarify any points in this letter.

Sincerely,

Furman S McDonald MD MPH
Senior Vice President for Academic and Medical Affairs
Professor of Medicine

Cc:
Richard J Baron, MD, MACP
President and CEO, American Board of Internal Medicine
Mira Irons, MD
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, American Board of Medical Specialties
