

**Board of Podiatric Medicine of California**  
**Focus Group Meeting**  
**April 24-25, 2008**  
**San Simeon, CA**

Executive Summary  
Franklin Medio, PhD

## **INTRODUCTION**

On April 24 and 25, 2008, the Board of Podiatric Medicine of California (BPM) convened a group of leaders from the California podiatric medicine community. This focus group was convened pursuant to recommendations by staff of the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Board's vote October 19, 2007. The focus group's purpose was to discuss the Board's determination that the national medical and osteopathic exams (USMLE and NBOME) are equivalent to those of the National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners (NBPME) for BPM's entry-level licensing purposes of DPMs, pursuant to Sections 2475.1, 2486 and 2488 of the State Medical Practice Act (B&P Code).

This report was prepared by Dr. Medio and approved by the focus group participants. The participants included the following:

Lawrence B. Harkless, DPM, Dean, Western University College of Podiatric Medicine;  
Lester J. Jones, DPM, Executive Associate Dean, Western University College of Podiatric Medicine;  
Dwayne Highsmith, DPM, Former BPM Exam Advisor;  
Frank Kase, DPM--Past President, California Podiatric Medical Association;  
Ken Phillips, DPM--Past President, BPM and the Federation of Podiatric Medical Boards;  
Mike Simons, DPM, Former BPM Consultant and Examiner;  
Phyllis Weinstein, DPM, Past Board Member, BPM and CPMA.

The meeting was moderated by Franklin J. Medio, PhD, a professional educator and former member of the Council on Podiatric Medical Education. Jim Rathlesberger, MPA, served as co-moderator and Wayne Doud, from the BPM, served as a resource staff member. The California College of Podiatric Medicine was not able to send a participant.

This group adhered to the Wikipedia definition of a focus group:

"A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members."

The following ground rules were stated at the outset: a) members were asked to address one another on a first name basis to build collegiality, b) members were not allowed to interrupt speakers or engage in sidebar conversations, c) members were encouraged to politely and actively listen to others, d) members were allowed to express any and all opinions and ideas, e) members were reminded that the purpose of the discussion was to explore ideas and not to make decisions, f) members were instructed to generate recommendations for BPM's future consideration, g) members were reminded that BPM staff participated as resources only, and h) members were encouraged to enjoy the camaraderie and discussion.

## OUTCOMES

As a result of the discussion, the group unanimously endorsed the BPM's regulatory determination of equivalent exams as a positive step forward. They identified the following points for future consideration.

### **Objective 1: Gather information related to preparing podiatric medical students and residents for the alternate exams (i.e., USMLE and COMLEX)**

- a. *The process of registering for an alternate exam.*
  - What are the general requirements of each testing organization?
  - Can a student/resident register for individual portions of the exam (i.e., Part 1, Part 2, etc.)?
  - What are the prerequisites for taking certain portions of the exams (e.g., must pass Part 1 in order to take Part 2 or must pass Parts 1&2 to take Part 3)?
  - If so, can the prerequisites be modified for podiatric students/residents?
  - Would the NBME or NBOME agree to expand Part 2, CS/PE and Part 3 to include a section on podiatric medicine and surgery?
- b. *The Board of Podiatric Medicine's policy for passing individual portions of an alternate exam.*
  - Can a student/resident pass one or more parts of the alternate exam (e.g., Part 1, Part 2, etc.)?
  - Should students/residents be required to pass certain parts of an alternate exam?
  - Should students or residents be required to complete all parts of an alternate exam?
- c. *The level of interest in taking an alternate exam among students and residents.*
  - How many students/residents have taken an alternate exam over the past five years?
  - How many current students/residents have expressed interest in taking an alternate exam?
  - What are the factors that motivate a student/resident to take an alternate exam?
- d. *Transferability of alternate exam results for DPM licensure to other states or territories.*
  - If a DPM is licensed in California after passing an alternate exam, can s/he transfer those exam scores to another state or territory when applying for licensure?
  - How can the BPM facilitate transferability of alternate exam scores for California licensees who seek licensure in another state or territory?
- e. *The financial costs to students and residents who chose to take an alternate exam.*
  - What are the additional costs for students/residents taking an alternate exam?
  - Who is responsible for paying these additional costs?
  - Are there ways to minimize the extra financial burden imposed by an alternate exam?
- f. *The current curriculum requirements at California's podiatric medical schools and the residency programs.*
  - What subject areas tested by the alternate exams are included within the podiatric medical school and residency courses, clerkships, didactic lectures and/or clinical rotations?
  - What modifications should be made to the curricular programs to cover all subject areas tested by the alternate exams?

**Objective 2: Initiate dialogue among organizations within the podiatric medicine community regarding implementation of the modified BPM regulation pertaining to alternate exams (i.e., USMLE and COMLEX)**

- a. *Revision and expansion of the National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners' exams to achieve parity with USMLE exams.*
  - Does the NBPME plan to expand the content of Part 2 to include the same areas as Part 2 of the USMLE?
  - Does the NBPME plan to add a performance component to Part 2 that is similar to the USMLE Clinical Skills exam?
  - Does the NBPME plan to integrate the current Part 1 and Part 2 exams into one written exam that parallels the NBME's plan for the USMLE Part 1 and Part 2 exams?
- b. *Adoption of a modification to the Federation of Podiatric Medical Board's MODEL LAW by members of the FPMB.*
  - What is the process for changing the wording of the current model law to reflect the current California regulation and allow other states to make similar changes in licensure requirements?
  - What obstacles, if any, exist to making this change?
  - What can be done to overcome them?
- c. *Review of reciprocity requirements for licensure among FPBM members.*
  - What is the process for expanding full license reciprocity between California and other states and/or territories?
  - What is the process for expanding partial license reciprocity for California licensees?
- d. *Expansion of podiatric medical school curricula to achieve parity with the core clinical curriculum requirements of allopathic medical schools.*
  - What AACPM and APMA efforts are underway to increase the medical and surgical education of podiatric medical students?
  - What are the AACPM's plans to develop curricula materials and evaluation methods that support these efforts?
- e. *Standardization of college and residency accreditation requirements to ensure that students and residents are adequately prepared for the USMLE or COMLEX exams.*
  - What CPME and APMA efforts are underway to provide students/residents with the same education and training clinical preparation as their allopathic and osteopathic colleagues?
  - What additional accreditation requirements are needed to achieve parity?
- f. *Modification of certifying board requirements to accept the results of the alternate exams for California licensees.*
  - What can be done by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery (ABPS) and the American Board of Podiatric Orthopedics and Primary Podiatric Medicine (ABPOPPM) to change their board requirements for California licensees who pass alternate exams in lieu of NBPME exams?
- g. *Support for a pilot project at one or both of California's podiatric medical schools to study the impact of student participation in an alternate exam for California licensure.*
  - What research questions should be addressed?
  - Are California's schools prepared to undertake this study?
  - What type of support can the California Podiatric Medical Association provide?
  - Are there residency programs in California prepared to participate in this impact study?