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November 29, 2013

Larry J. Copeland, M.D. and Frank W. Ling, M.D.

c/o The American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology

2915 Vine Street

Dallas, Texas 75204

Re: ABOG ID 24150

Dear Drs. Copeland, Ling and Members of the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology,

I am a strong believer in the Oath of Maimonides. It reads:

 “Grant me the strength, time and opportunity always to correct what I have acquired, always to extend its domain; for knowledge is immense and the spirit of man can extend indefinitely to enrich itself daily with new requirements. Today he can discover his errors of yesterday and tomorrow he can obtain a new light on what he thinks himself sure of today…”

I also embrace the parallel concept of *satyagraha,* loosely translated as "insistence on truth" (*satya* 'truth'; *agraha* 'insistence') coined and developed by Mahatma Gandhi.1,2,3,4

Among others, I have previously published that MOC has never been proven to improve the quality of medical practice. To the contrary, it has been associated with the decreased collegiality of our profession as well as decreased involvement in local as well as national medical societies.5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16  Most practicing physicians find MOC to be clinically irrelevant 6,7,16 , and polling of physicians in clinical practice showed that only 1.6% wished to maintain the current system – whereas 4.7% supported reform and 93.7% voted to abolish requirements altogether.9

The American Board of Medical Specialties has published that the quality of research on MOC does not meet commonly accepted research standards17 and that certification does not “guarantee performance or positive outcomes”.18

As respected professionals, we as obstetrician/gynecologists believe in our own continued education and quality improvement. Accordingly, if MOC has not been empirically proven to improve our practices, or be clinically relevant for most of us, than why is it being forced down upon us?

*Veritas vos liberabit* ***–*** Shouldn’t we insist on truth? If MOC is inadvertently decreasing attendance at scholarly and collegial meetings, shouldn’t we consider that detrimental to the medical profession? With 50% of the counties in America lacking an obstetrician to deliver babies, won’t the early retirements MOC could provoke worsen the health access crisis?

The AMA House of Delegates study on the impact of MOC on physicians concluded, in a resounding consensus at their June 2013 meeting, that these programs were “burdensome, costly, and have little known positive impact on patient outcomes”11. You must also be aware that resolutions against MOC have recently been enacted by the American Medical Association and the state medical societies of New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, New York and North Carolina.

As you know, ABOG is currently tangentially involved in civil litigation with the Association of Physicians and Surgeons (US District Court No. 3:13-cv-2609-PGS-LHG) **–** as an apparent co-conspirator in “an unlawful conspiracy in restraint of trade in violation of Section 1 of the Sherman Act”. Furthermore, previous US Courts have favored antitrust provisions against other monopolistic professional certification processes19. On behalf of all Diplomates, I respectfully request a delay in continuing the current MOC process until the Court has ruled on this litigation.

I believe that my request is quite reasonable. In the words of Thomas Paine,

“He that in defense of reason rebels against tyranny has a better title to Defender of the Faith.”

With respect and *satyagraha*,

Howard C. Mandel M.D., FACOG

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Dear Dr. Mandel,

Thank you for your letter of November 29, 2013. You communicated your opinions about the value of MOC, and you asked for a delay in continuing the current MOC process until a District Court has ruled on current litigation involving the ABMS and the APS.

An ad hoc committee of ABOG has reviewed your email and the request to delay continuing the current ABOG MOC process. The committee denied your request for a delay in the current ABOG MOC process.

Please be aware that you have missed the deadline for application to participate in 2013 MOC. In addition, the deadline for completion of all 2013 MOC assignments is December 15, 2013.

ABOG records indicate that you are in MOC cycle year 6. Please be aware that your choice to not apply and to not participate in ABOG MOC this year means that you are choosing to let your certification expire on December 31, 2013. Please contact the ABOG MOC department immediately, if this is not your intent.

Thank you for your prior years of participation in ABOG MOC and for your commitment to the healthcare of women.

Sincerely,

George D. Wendel, MD



Maintenance of Certification

American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology

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