



BUSINESS

Clinical informatics now a subspecialty

Physicians will be able to take board exams beginning in the fall of 2012, with the first certificates awarded in 2013.

By PAMELA LEWIS DOLAN, amednews staff. Posted Oct. 10, 2011.

Physicians will be able to add another medical subspecialty to their credentials: clinical informatics.

The American Board of Medical Specialties in September approved clinical informatics as a board-certified medical subspecialty. The move followed a six-year campaign by the American Medical Informatics Assn. and other medical informatics advocates.

The clinical informatics subspecialty certification will be available to any physician who has a primary specialty certification through the ABMS and passes the certification exam.

Medical informatics is the combination of clinical knowledge and data used to increase the quality of care. Because more of medicine is data-driven and computer-assisted, there has been a growing demand for physicians to enter the field. That way, a doctor can decide what data are most useful in clinical decision-making, as well as the most efficient ways for data to be delivered and used by physicians.

Certification will be based on a set of core competencies that was heavily influenced by AMIA. The organization also is developing online and in-person courses to help prepare physicians for the board test. The classes are expected to be ready by spring 2012.

"It is entirely appropriate and timely to certify clinical informatics as a specialized area of training and expertise in an era when more and more clinicians are turning to data-driven, computer-assisted clinical decision support to provide care for their patients," said Nancy Lorenzi, PhD, chair of AMIA's board of directors. "Clinical informatics blends medical and informatics knowledge to support and optimize health care delivery."

AMIA said the creation of the board-certified medical subspecialty will help address the shortfall of informatics professionals. The organization says about 50,000 are needed to meet demand. Because of federal incentives for use of electronic medical records, adoption rates have increased significantly, placing a heavy demand on the professionals needed to implement and maintain those systems.

"Establishment of the clinical informatics subspecialty is consistent with the current emphasis on broadening and professionalizing the health information technology work force," said AMIA President and CEO Edward Shortliffe, MD, PhD. "The CI exam will encourage more medical schools to build informatics into their training programs and to begin addressing real-world information management needs of physicians in virtually every work environment."

According to AMIA, the role of the clinical informatician will include:

- Assessing the knowledge-based needs of health care professionals and patients.
- Characterizing, evaluating and refining clinical processes.
- Developing, implementing and refining clinical decision support systems.
- Leading or participating in the procurement, customization, development, implementation, management, evaluation and improvement of clinical information systems such as electronic medical records and order-entry systems.

AMIA developed the core content of the clinical informatics subspecialty with support from a grant by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The organization also established training requirements for future clinical informatics residency programs. Those are awaiting approval by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.

Copyright 2011 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.

RELATED CONTENT

» [Go tech go: Championing new health IT](#) Dec. 8, 2008