
The benefits of certification by the American Board of Orthodontics

Why be an ABO Diplomate? Are there advantages to being certified? These are fundamental questions that are asked throughout the specialty. The question is multifaceted and has many ramifications, just as many ramifications as there are personalities in orthodontics. There are several answers to the question, but quite probably not all of the answers will apply to a given person. People have different motivations for doing things.

It is the Board's hope that the orthodontic specialists who are Diplomates have gone through the certification process for the right reasons. These reasons are couched in the ethical fiber of our specialty. They can be listed as follows:

1. There is a significant amount of personal growth and satisfaction in becoming Board certified. It is a "mountain" that is there. It needs to be climbed. Many specialists feel that it is their duty to climb it. In many ways this might be the best reason of all for becoming Board certified.
2. There is an increased level of professional competency because of the self-analysis that is required to become Board certified. One cannot look at his or her work, have it studied by peers, and not learn something. The Board certified orthodontist has "laid it on the table" and said "Here it is, look at it, and tell me what you think." Though it is humbling, it is a very gratifying experience to have the personal satisfaction and confidence in one's self that it requires to have your work evaluated by peers.
3. Alexander Pope stated it best when he said "A little learning is a dangerous thing. Drink deep or taste not the Pierian Spring." Board certification implies that the orthodontist is a lifelong student. His or her Board experience is a learning experience. One becomes stale and stagnant if there is no learning. The Board certified orthodontist should not rest on Board certification. Learning is lifelong. An orthodontist should continue to learn. The Board experience will stimulate the clinician to do just that.
4. The Board experience instills confidence in the candidate and in the Diplomate. There is nothing like the acceptance and congratulations that you receive from your peers. Board certification is gratifying. The pin and the "bee" on your name badge at the AAO and constituent meetings mean that you have gone a step beyond.
5. It is wonderful to be a part of something good. The Board continues to strive to improve standards of orthodontics in the United States, Canada, and throughout the world. The person who continues in the certification process and ultimately becomes certified is helping with that effort. He or she is doing a part to make worldwide orthodontics better, and ultimately, to make the world better.

Therefore, the benefits of Board certification can be found within each individual. The conscientious Board certified orthodontist knows and understands that Board certification does not make him or her better than the orthodontist next door. In the words of George Ewan, "It makes one a better clinician than before the Board experience." It is something that we do for ourselves. It is not something we do for anyone else. It is certainly not something we do so that we can put it in the paper and flaunt it.

The Board's certificate has no legal standing. The Diplomate is not to use Board certification to promote himself or herself as being better than a colleague. It is, however, a powerful psychological factor in stimulating specialists to acquire increased knowledge and skill in their respective branches.

The Directors of the American Board of Orthodontics and the clinicians who have become certified and have formed the College of Diplomates of the American Board of Orthodontics are committed to the specialty of orthodontics. The College of Diplomates provides seeker seminars and many other resources for the orthodontist who wishes to go the step beyond and become Board certified. There are simply no disadvantages to the certification process. The only disadvantage is in never doing it.

Diplomates of the Board encourage all their colleagues who are not Board certified to step up to the plate and take the plunge. You will certainly be glad you did!

The advantages that have been described are intangible. Tangible benefits of Board certification include the following:

1. It enhances the record-keeping system in any orthodontic office. Records have to be well documented for Board certification. It simply is a good habit to get into and Board certification stimulates this excellent habit.
2. Diplomate status allows one to become a member of the College of Diplomates of the American Board of Orthodontics and attend their meeting each year.
3. Board certification is an excellent means of evaluating and improving one's treatment results. The certification process gives each of us a look inward at ourselves. It allows us to think about it and to make ourselves better than we were.