



American Board of Addiction Medicine

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Dr. Jason ZW Powers CERTIFIED BY NEW ADDICTION MEDICINE BOARD

American Board of Addiction Medicine to Address Significant, Unmet Need

Chevy Chase, Maryland – July 15, 2009 – Dr. Jason ZW Powers is among the first physicians in the United States certified by the American Board of Addiction Medicine, a new independent medical specialty board. The American Board of Addiction Medicine (ABAM) has begun to certify addiction medicine physicians from several specialties, including emergency medicine, family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, preventive medicine, psychiatry, neurology and surgery. There was previously only addiction-related board certification for psychiatrists. ABAM sets standards for physician education, assesses physicians' knowledge, and requires and tracks life-long continuing education.

“We want addiction prevention, screening, intervention and treatment to become routine aspects of medical care, available virtually any place health care is provided,” said Kevin B. Kunz, MD, President of the American Board of Addiction Medicine.

Although one in five Americans entering the health care system has a substance abuse problem, there has never been a medical specialty board, drawn from all areas of medicine, dedicated to certifying addiction specialists. Now, patients have a way to find specialized medical care for substance use disorders related to alcohol, tobacco and other addicting drugs, including some prescription medications.

“Physicians are often at a loss for what to do about substance use and addiction issues, and may even misdiagnose the problem,” said Kevin B. Kunz, MD, President of the American Board of Addiction Medicine. “We hope to change this by creating a cadre of thousands of specialized physicians across medical specialties.”

“I am pleased at the strides we have made in the field of addiction medicine. It is gratifying to see that after many years, the disease of addiction is finally recognized for what it is. Maybe the lack of stigma will allow those in need to get the help they deserve. My goal is continue to provide compassionate and evidence-based care and represent the Board to the best of my ability.”

Studies show that fewer than one in five physicians consider themselves adequately prepared to diagnose alcoholism or other drug use disorders. Physician training is sorely lacking. Separate courses in addiction medicine are rarely taught in medical school, and there are no addiction medicine residencies among the 8,200 American Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) accredited residency programs in the nation's hospitals.

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“The American Board of Addiction Medicine will provide assurance to the American public that Addiction Medicine physicians have the knowledge and skills to prevent, recognize and treat addiction,” said Dr. Kunz. “ABAM-certified physicians will also be able to address common medical or psychiatric conditions related to the use of addictive substances.”

Created in 2007, with the assistance and encouragement of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, ABAM offers a rigorous certifying examination that was developed by an expert panel and the National Board of Medical Examiners, as well as a re-certification examination to ensure that ABAM-certified physicians maintain life-long competence in addiction medicine. ABAM has formed a governing body of 15 distinguished physicians from across a range of medical specialties, each of whom is certified by a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS).

ABAM is in the process of seeking recognition from ABMS, and plans to certify physicians in multiple specialties. ABAM is also taking steps to create addiction medicine training programs affiliated with the nation’s top medical schools, and will apply to the ACGME to accredit these programs.

The new medical specialty board is being launched at a time of increasing promise for addiction treatment. Recent discoveries have added to the preponderance of evidence that addiction is a chronic disease of the brain, with unique vulnerabilities and pathology, and a predictable course if not interrupted by effective treatment. An increasing number of medically based addiction treatments have become available, and more are on the horizon.

“Years of scientific research have proven drug addiction is a brain disease caused by biological, environmental and developmental factors—a disease which can have far reaching medical consequences. Given the proper training, tools, and resources, physicians can be the first line of defense against substance abuse and addiction--identifying drug use early, preventing its escalation to abuse and addiction, and referring patients in need to treatment,” said Nora D. Volkow, MD, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Congress recently passed legislation that addresses insurance discrimination against those with addictions, requiring as of October 2009 that private insurance coverage of addiction treatment, when provided, is offered in the same way that all other medical and surgical coverage is provided.

“Now that this barrier has been reduced, we want to make sure that evidence-based addiction treatment is available to all who need it,” said Dr. Kunz.

For more information, including details on the 2010 ABAM Certification Examination, please visit www.ABAM.net