Re: 2016-2017 Update to Vascular Surgery Programs

Dear Program Director:

With the 2016-2017 academic year underway, the American Board of Surgery would like to update you on new developments and highlight some existing policies related to vascular surgery certification.

2017 VSITE
The 2017 Vascular Surgery In-Training Examination (VSITE) will be held on Friday, March 3, and Saturday, March 4. You may administer the exam to your trainees on either day (or both days). It will be a five-hour, web-based examination containing roughly 200 multiple-choice questions covering both core surgery and vascular surgery. All examinees will be required to take all content. Order information and further details will be sent to you later this fall.

2017 Vascular Surgery QE
The next Vascular Surgery Qualifying Examination (QE) will be held on Monday, Sept. 11, 2017. The exam application deadlines will be:

- Initial Application Deadline: Monday, July 3
- Late Application Deadline: Monday, July 17

Please make certain all graduating trainees are correctly indicated on your program’s ABS roster. Applicants will be able to access the online application process for the QE by mid-April. When applying, they will be required to provide documentation of current or past certification in Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) and Advanced Trauma Life Support® (ATLS®). Please see our Vascular Surgery Qualifying Exam area on our website for other requirements.

Vascular Surgery CE: Must Have RPVI Certification and Full Medical License
To allow trainees more time to fulfill the requirement for Registered Physician Vascular Interpretation® (RPVI®) certification, going forward we will not require it until registration for the Vascular Surgery Certifying Exam (CE). Candidates must have RPVI certification to register for the CE. They must also hold a full and unrestricted medical license (U.S. or Canada), even if they are pursuing additional training. Temporary, limited, educational or institutional medical licenses will not be accepted under any circumstances.

Candidates should register for the CE as soon as possible once the QE results are posted. When applying for the QE, any individuals who have already obtained the RPVI credential and a full medical license should provide the documentation with their QE application so we will have it on file.

Please encourage your trainees to complete the RPVI requirement as early as possible in their training. They should make sure to allow enough time for testing and possible retesting, as well as time for the exam results to be published, which can take approximately 60 days. The RPVI credential is now offered by the Alliance for Physician Certification and Advancement (APCA). The required examination is offered two times per year, with accompanying application deadlines. For more on RPVI, please see the APCA website at www.apca.org/rpvi.

Independent Trainees – General Surgery QE Application Required
Graduates of independent programs (5+2) are required to have an approved application to the General Surgery Qualifying Exam, even if they plan only to pursue certification in vascular surgery. The next General Surgery QE will be held on Thursday, July 20, 2017. Please see below for the corresponding application deadlines.

- Initial Application Deadline: Friday, April 14
- Late Application Deadline: Monday, May 15

All general surgery training and application requirements must be met for application approval, including completion of ACLS, ATLS and Fundamentals of Laparoscopic Surgery® (FLS®), and payment of the application fee. Successful completion of the General Surgery QE itself, however, is not required for vascular surgery certification.
Integrated Trainees – 40 SCC Cases Required

This past spring, the defined category case minimums for general surgery residency were updated effective with the 2017-2018 academic year. To be consistent with these new minimums, individuals applying for vascular surgery certification who began integrated (0+5) vascular surgery training as of July 2015 or thereafter will be required to have a minimum of 40 cases in surgical critical care by the end of residency. This minimum was previously 25 cases. This includes at least one case in each of the seven categories: ventilatory management; bleeding (non-trauma); hemodynamic instability; organ dysfunction/failure; dysrhythmias; invasive line management and monitoring; and parenteral/enteral nutrition.

Clinical vs. Non-Clinical Time

The ABS requires 48 weeks of full-time clinical experience in each year of training. The remaining four weeks of the year are considered non-clinical time that may be used for any purpose. While the ABS considers the 48-week requirement to be of the utmost importance, the 48 weeks may be averaged to provide some flexibility.

- For independent programs (5+2), a total of 96 weeks of full-time clinical activity is required over the 2 years of vascular surgery training. For documented medical conditions, including pregnancy and delivery, directly affecting the individual (i.e., not family leave), the ABS will accept a total of 94 weeks.

- For integrated programs (0+5), a total of 144 weeks of full-time clinical activity is required in the first 3 years, and 96 weeks in last 2 years. For documented medical conditions, including pregnancy and delivery, directly affecting the individual (i.e., not family leave), the ABS will accept 142 weeks in the first 3 years and 94 weeks in last 2 years.

The ABS additionally allows the five clinical years of integrated residency training to be completed over a six-year period. All training must be completed at a single program with advance approval from the ABS.

No approval is needed for the standard medical leave as outlined above. However all other cases require prior ABS approval. For additional details, please refer to our Leave Policy at www.absurgery.org.

Deadline for Foreign Training Credit Requests

Please be aware that requests for more than one year of credit in integrated programs (0+5) for previous foreign graduate medical education must be submitted by March 15. This deadline allows time for review by the ABS Credentials Committee in order to provide program directors with a decision by May 1. Requests should only be submitted to the ABS office once all required documentation is available.

Requests for one year of credit may be approved at any time by the executive director of the ABS, whereas requests for more than one year of credit must be approved by the ABS Credentials Committee.

Program directors should make the request for credit only after having observed the individual for at least six months to ascertain that clinical performance is consistent with the level of credit to be requested. Requests must be sent by mail or fax to the ABS office with all required documentation. Please refer to the full policy at www.absurgery.org.

Letter Required for All Official Requests

Please note that all requests regarding training, credit for foreign training, J-1 visa authorizations, etc., must be sent by mail or fax on official letterhead to the ABS office—no emails. This will ensure your request is received, recorded and tracked by ABS staff. Official approvals or denials from the ABS will always be sent via U.S. Mail.

Please make your faculty and trainees aware of this information as appropriate. Any questions may be directed to the ABS office at 215-568-4000 or vsqe@absurgery.org. Thank you for your assistance and best wishes for the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Bruce A. Perler, M.D.
Associate Executive Director for Vascular Surgery

c: Program coordinator