Interventional Radiology/Diagnostic Radiology (IR/DR) – Latest Information

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What is the new certificate in IR/DR?

The American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) approved the Interventional Radiology/Diagnostic Radiology (IR/DR) Certificate in 2012 to recognize interventional radiology as a unique medical specialty addressing the diagnosis and treatment of diseases through expertise in diagnostic imaging, image-guided minimally invasive procedures, and the evaluation and clinical management of patients with conditions amenable to these methods. The new IR/DR certificate will be one of four primary certificates offered by the ABR, the other three being in diagnostic radiology, radiation oncology, and medical physics.

When will the certificate in IR/DR be available?

The date of issue of the first certificates in IR/DR will depend on a number of external factors. The first IR residents are expected to graduate and sit for the IR/DR certificate examination in 2017. Those who hold a subspecialty certificate in vascular and interventional radiology (VIR), and who meet the necessary Maintenance of Certification (MOC) requirements, will be awarded IR/DR certificates as a replacement for their current VIR subspecialty certificate.

How is the IR/DR certificate different from the traditional DR certificate?

Those certified in IR/DR will have demonstrated competency to practice in diagnostic radiology, as well as the full scope of interventional radiology. The IR/DR certificate is intended to recognize the high level of competence needed for the contemporary practice of interventional radiology.

Will the DR certificate eventually go away?

No. The DR certificate will continue to be offered.

How is the IR/DR certificate different from a DR certificate with a subspecialty certificate in VIR?

In five to seven years, the new IR/DR certificate will become the sole certificate issued by the ABR in interventional radiology. The training requirements leading to the new certificate in IR/DR will be more rigorous compared to those of the subspecialty in VIR. For example, candidates will be expected to have training in critical care medicine, will have additional training in IR, and will have experience in admitting patients and in periprocedural care. The transition from VIR fellowships to IR residencies is expected to be a seven-year process.
Will the VIR subspecialty certificate eventually go away?

Yes, it will be replaced by the IR/DR certificate as the singular certification recognized for IR specialists. The exact date will depend on ACGME program accreditation standards and other external conditions resulting from the new IR/DR certification process. Eventually, the VIR subspecialty certificate will sunset, and practitioners holding this certificate who meet the requirements of MOC will be issued the new certificate.

What if I already have a VIR subspecialty certificate?

Those who hold a VIR subspecialty certificate will be issued a replacement IR/DR certificate, at no additional cost, if they are meeting all Maintenance of Certification (MOC) requirements.

What are the requirements for initial certification in IR/DR?

Candidates for the IR/DR certificate must successfully complete an ACGME-accredited IR residency. This is a distinct training process, separate from the DR training. The IR training requirements include one clinical year, followed by five years of an ACGME-accredited residency.

The residency training includes:

- Three years of diagnostic radiology training (same as a standard DR residency), which should include some months of IR training
- Two years of interventional radiology training
  - Includes training in critical care medicine
  - Includes training in periprocudural care and inpatient admitting service – admitting patients and caring for them before, during, and after IR procedures

The examination structure involves:

- DR Core Examination in the 36th month of training
- Computer-based and oral examinations three months after completion of training

When will IR residencies begin?

The ACGME will write the program requirements, submit them for a 45-day public comment period, and present them to the ACGME Committee on Requirements. When the requirements receive final approval, accreditation of IR residencies can begin. The earliest this is likely to occur is July 2015.

Each training institution will need to review the requirements and determine whether and when to offer training through an IR residency program. As IR/DR residencies are offered at individual institutions, VIR fellowships will be accordingly phased out. Trainees currently enrolled in VIR fellowships will be able to complete their training.

How will these changes impact me if I’m currently in training?

We recommend you continue your training and seek certification according to the current processes already in place. If you are interested in practicing in interventional radiology, you can seek certification in DR with a subspecialty in VIR. As stated above, those who hold a VIR subspecialty certificate will be issued a replacement IR/DR certificate through meeting all Maintenance of Certification (MOC) requirements.
Those who have begun DR training also may have an opportunity to transfer into the IR/DR certification process by transferring to an IR residency.

What will happen to the DIRECT Pathway?

The DIRECT pilot is currently still in effect; however, no new programs will be approved to allow training in this pathway. At a point in the future (based on when VIR fellowships are phased out), no new applicants will be permitted into the DIRECT pathway.

Details about training and the IR/DR certificate are still under development. Check back later for the latest information or additional answers to common questions.