

ARIZONA MEDICAL BOARD SCOPE OF PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Introduction

Medical Boards make basic assumptions when resolving Scope of Practice issues for physicians. Paramount among those assumptions is that the public must be protected from poorly trained or unqualified physicians.

The Arizona Medical Board developed these Scope of Practice Guidelines to assist physicians in assessing their specific qualifications when they make the decision to undertake new procedures, employ new technologies or migrate into new areas of medical practice for which they have not received formal post graduate/residency training.

Preamble

The Arizona Medical Board (Board) recognizes that the practice of medicine is dynamic with respect to scientific and technological advancements. Physician practice patterns are changing with evolving medical knowledge and treatment modalities, new technologies, and fluctuations within health care specialties and the healthcare workforce. Consumer demand has contributed to changes in practice patterns as well.

Laws defining the practice of medicine, in Arizona and nationwide, are broadly defined and do not restrict a licensee from adopting new technologies, employing new procedures, broadening one's scope of practice or even entering into a different area of practice from which he or she was formally trained. While the law may not restrict these changes in practice patterns, the Board does have the obligation to ensure patient safety through the competent practice of medicine.

Prior to licensure, physicians must graduate from an approved medical school, complete an approved residency program and pass standardized tests. Physicians who complete these necessary requirements are presumed competent to practice within the field in which they received their formal training. Formal training requirements must meet national standards and are heavily regulated and scrutinized. A physician who meets the qualifications for licensure has an unlimited scope of practice. The standard of care, however, requires physicians to be trained, qualified and competent to perform medical procedures before engaging in a particular practice or field of medicine.

Post-formal training and continuing medical education does not receive the same level of scrutiny. While, it is critical for physicians to remain competent and current in the practice of medicine, this training may not be adequate for physicians trying to practice specialty care far afield from their formal post graduate/residency training.

Guidelines

Physicians who practice in specialty areas, whether or not they received formal training, must be competent in all procedures they perform regardless of where they received their training.

For example, internists, who also perform dermatological procedures, must be competent in all procedures that they perform. Likewise, a radiologist practicing radiology for many years may require additional training before being competent to practice emergency department medicine or urgent care medicine.

Areas in which the Board has recently seen physicians expand their scopes of practice include:

- Pain management
- Cosmetic surgery
- Treatment of Erectile dysfunction

While these areas are not inclusive of all the areas in which physicians have expanded their scopes of practice, they represent areas in which physicians have found themselves outside their training and skill levels – at times, to the detriment of their patients. Physicians must be aware of any complications that can arise during the course of a procedure and be prepared to adequately address them. Physicians administering anesthesia during office based surgery must also be aware of the Board's Office Based Surgery Rules, specifically R4-16-702(A)(3)(d), which requires "...the physician and health care professional administering the sedation to rescue a patient after sedation is administered and the patient enters into a deeper state of sedation than what was intended by the physician."

Obtaining Practice Area Expertise and Considerations for an Expanded Scope of Practice:

Practice area expertise can be obtained in a number of ways, including: mini-residency programs, informal training by a hospital or group practice, seminars prepared by private organizations, and direct training by medical equipment manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies. Regardless of how expertise is obtained, physicians should consider the following factors before engaging in an expanded practice:

- What competencies (clinical knowledge, judgment and skills) are required in order to provide services safely and competently?
- What are the prerequisites and the core education needed in terms of undergraduate and postgraduate education and clinical experience?
- Will the education received meet the standards and be recognized by an independent and formally accredited educational organization or institution?
- Is the expanded scope of practice appropriate for the education and training received? How does that education compare to that of other practitioners providing the same service?
- What goals must be established for attaining and retaining competence in that specialty area?

Competence Self-Assessment:

Once additional training is complete, and prior to beginning an expanded practice, physicians may elect to obtain an assessment of their skills. Assessment and evaluation programs are available through institutions such as the University of California San Diego Physician Assessment and Clinical Evaluation (PACE) program or the Colorado Center for Personalized Education for Physicians (CPEP). Additional assessment tools may be available through specialty medical societies or through county and state medical associations.

Summary:

These guidelines were developed to assist physicians in their understanding of the Arizona Medical Board's position on Scope of Practice issues and the Board's obligation to protect the public through the competent practice of medicine. The Board expects physicians to maintain their educational and technical competencies for their current practices. The Board strongly recommends that these Scope of Practice Guidelines be carefully reviewed by all physicians holding current licenses to practice medicine in Arizona.