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April 6, 2020

To: Thoracic Surgery Program Directors
Thoracic Surgery residents / fellows finishing in Summer, 2020

From: Joe B. Putnam, Jr., MD, Chair
David A. Fullerton, MD, Executive Director

RE: Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on ABTS case requirements and optional ABTS case requirements' review.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected Graduate Medical Education programs globally. Today, as hospitals and medical staff prepare for or treat patients with known or suspected COVID-19 infections, the operative experience for senior Thoracic Surgery Residents and Fellows has decreased. Elective operations have been curtailed for all specialties. The ACGME has recently commented on this challenge. (<https://www.acgme.org/Portals/0/Documents/COVID-19/SurgCOVID19LTC.pdf>)

The case requirements leading to certification by the ABTS were created to validate the public's trust in physicians certified by the ABTS. Program Directors (for Traditional 2-year or 3- year programs; I6; Vascular Surgery Pathway, or Congenital Cardiac Surgery) are responsible both to the ACGME for maintaining accreditation, and to the ABTS to ensure proficiency leading to certification. Proficiency is validated, in part, by the case requirements.

Programs or Candidates, who anticipate a problem in achieving the ABTS case requirements for a particular pathway should contact the ABTS (Dr. Fullerton) by 30 April 2020 to request a ruling from the ABTS as to whether or not their case-list (or the anticipated case list projected to be achieved by the end of June) would be acceptable for entry into the certification process. We should then be able to offer the candidate and the Program Director information as to whether additional time-in-training for that resident may be necessary.

Please contact the ABTS office by phone (312-202-5900) or email (info@abts.org) to initiate this process.

In addition, we hope that you and your team will keep safe and stay well, and compassionately care for your community and yourself.