

April 10, 2020

Dear CT Surgery Residency Program Directors,

On April 8 the TSDA Executive Committee met with Dr. Bill Putnam, Chair of the ABTS, to discuss the ABTS memo dated April 6 regarding issues that may develop due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ability of graduating trainees achieving their operative minimum requirements. Dr. Putnam was able to provide some additional details regarding the process described in the ABTS memo.

First and foremost, Dr. Putnam expressed that the intent of the ABTS is to be flexible when considering specific trainees and any gaps in their case log minimums that may arise secondary to the impact of COVID-19 on their institution. However, ABTS also has a commitment to certify competent diplomats. Finally, the ABTS greatly values the Program Director's assessment of a candidate's competency. The ABTS considered a number of factors when deciding their approach to issues surrounding case minimums, including:

- The wide variety of training pathways (I6, traditional 2-year and 3-year, 4/3, congenital)
- The differences in trainees' career tracks (Cardiothoracic, General Thoracic and Congenital pathways)
- The decision to set case requirements as the "minimum" needed to help achieve competency
- Different programs and trainees reach competency in different areas at different rates
- The need to maintain a fair and consistent process now and in the future
- The ABTS's commitment to the American Board of Medical Specialties
- The ABTS's commitment to the public

To that end, the TSDA and the ABTS recommend that Program Directors do the following for their senior level trainees:

1. Ensure they update their case logs to include all cases to date.
2. Review their numbers relative to their track (Cardiothoracic, General Thoracic or Congenital).
3. For those cases where there is a current shortfall, estimate their ability to meet minimums considering the impact of COVID-19 on your institutional case volumes.
4. If there is even a remote concern that they will not meet minimums, either call the ABTS office at 312-202-5900, or reach out by email at info@abts.org, and explain your concerns, listing:
 - a. the track and pathway your trainee is on,
 - b. their expected graduation date, and
 - c. the cases where a shortfall is estimated.
5. Direct communication with Dr. David Fullerton, ABTS Executive Director, based on that information may be necessary.

TSDA's leadership understands this is a stressful time for all. To provide some additional assistance a new page devoted to [COVID resources](#) has been published on TSDA's website. Questions can also be directed to COVID@tsda.org. We will do our best to respond in a timely fashion and post a FAQ resource as appropriate.

Stay safe everyone,

TSDA Executive Committee

cc: Associate Program Directors
Program Coordinators