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American Board of Internal Medicine sanctions 139 physicians and sues 5

By Lindsay Maleson & Gary Schulz

Last week, the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM), which administers the Board certification examinations for physicians specializing in internal medicine and its subspecialties, took sweeping disciplinary action against 139 physicians for alleged ethical violations. The Board’s sanctions range from letters of concern to suspensions of certifications for up to five years to revocation.1 The ABIM charges that the sanctioned physicians participated in a New Jersey-based test preparation course, Arora Board Review, which allegedly provided them with confidential ABIM test questions recalled by prior examinees. In addition, the ABIM alleges that Arora Board Review encouraged course participants to relay questions from memory to it immediately following the Board exam. The ABIM asserts that the shared test questions recalled by examinees were confidential, that all examinees were directed not to discuss exam content, and that examinees agreed to pledges of honesty that prohibited them from reproducing the questions. According to the ABIM, sharing examination questions is a breach of the professional standards required of its Board-certified physicians.

In addition to imposing sanctions on 139 physicians, the ABIM also sued 5 of the alleged “most egregious offenders” in actions filed in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. The lawsuits include causes of action for copyright infringement, misappropriation of trade secrets, and breach of contract.

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