Overview of Residency Training in Preventive Medicine

Preventive Medicine is an exciting specialty that links the knowledge and skills of clinical medicine with the special skill sets of medical management and population health. Specialists work in diverse settings to promote health and to modify or eliminate the risks of disease, injury, disability, and death. Career paths include managed care, public health, occupational medicine, aerospace medicine, clinical medicine, informatics, policy development, academic medicine, international medicine, and research, covering all levels of government, educational institutions, organized medical care programs in industry, as well as voluntary health agencies and professional health organizations.

Preventive medicine is one of 25 recognized medical specialties represented in the American Board of Specialties (ABMS). Completion of residency training in preventive medicine is an essential step to become certified in one or more of the preventive medicine specialty areas: General Preventive Medicine/Public Health (referred to throughout the directory as GPH), Occupational Medicine (OM), and Aerospace Medicine (AM). There are currently over 75 accredited Preventive Medicine residency training programs in the United States. Generally, programs are located in schools of medicine, schools of public health, state or local health departments, and in federal agencies (i.e., Centers for Disease Control) and military bases (i.e., Walter Reed Army Institute of Research). These programs are usually small and take an individualized approach to training. There are approximately 450 residents in training every year.

Residency program accreditation is accomplished through the Preventive Medicine Residency Review Committee (RRC) of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). The ACGME-RRC is the body which establishes accreditation requirements for residency programs and which reviews the programs to determine their compliance with the requirements. You can contact them at www.acgme.org.

Board certification is offered through the American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM). Established in 1948, ABPM is the body with responsibility for determining physician eligibility for certification and recertification in preventive medicine. The Board can be contacted at www.abprevmed.org.