Editorial

A new vision for the medical certification and licensure process

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Licensing is crucial to the integrity of world-class healthcare. It ensures that all physicians are practicing under a high standard and keeping up with the rapidly evolving health-care system through continuing education.

Licensing process for individual states is governed by the state medical board (SMB); therefore, physicians' movement among states requires an application to the SMB and each hospital for licensure and credentialing. The application process requires the applicant to enter a large amount of information concerning medical education, training, work experience, lawsuit claims, etc., which creates redundancy and adds burden to the applicant.

Although different states have different requirements for medical licensing, a significant overlap exists concerning the type of information. The same is true for hospital credentialing applications. This highlights the need for more efficient methods to make the application process less burdensome. Existing entities who have attempted to resolve this issue continue to fall short. For example, the Federation of State Medical Boards collect and store physicians' information concerning medical education and training which can be sent directly to the SMB of interest on request by the applicant. This process has helped in streamlining physician licensure, but significant redundancy continues to exist.

We propose an all-encompassing, secure, and efficient method of storing physician information to expedite the application process, lower the costs, and allow doctors to easily move between states to provide high-quality care to patients. Envisioned is a system with a comprehensive longitudinal database to store information such as medical education, postgraduate training, work experience, medical liability claims, references, and others. The proposed system will enable each physician to maintain an up-to-date profile, and when needed an application can be submitted easily through selecting the SMB and or hospital of interest, where it can be evaluated by their employees. This process requires establishing a secure computer driven communication between the proposed database and SMB's and hospital systems that will enable data transmission. Therefore, a participation by all SMBs and hospitals is necessary. Moreover, additional functionalities can be included like sending data directly to background check entities which will eliminates the need to submit a separate application.

The proposed system has the potential to increase the efficiency of the licensing process and minimize the burden on the applicants, hospitals, and SMB.

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