

CAP Certificate Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Why is the CAP launching the Certificate Program?

Consistent with its vision, the College has launched the CAP Certificate Program for several reasons:

- Members have asked us to develop a pathway that allows pathologists to be recognized for experience acquired during practice, provided they meet objective, knowledge-based and performance-based criteria.
- While the College recognizes the tremendous learning opportunity afforded by fellowship training, many practicing pathologists and fellowship directors do not believe that completion of a fellowship should signify expertise for an entire practice lifetime. The CAP Certificate Program is designed to ensure that recipients of certificates keep their knowledge and skills current.
- Self-declared specialists often compete for business with general pathologists. Many pathologists are concerned that some of these individuals have unproven expertise. The CAP Certificate Program has been designed to allow participating pathologists to show objective evidence of their expertise.
- Other specialty organizations have created certificates to promote their own educational programs or products. Many pathologists believe it is important to offer a program that measures knowledge and skill that can be acquired from a variety of sources.
- Some patient advocacy groups have advised patients to always have their biopsies interpreted at large medical centers. Practicing pathologists know that expertise is found in a variety of practice settings large and small. The CAP Certificate Program is designed to provide a route through which pathologists can establish their expertise regardless of the setting in which they practice, so long as they meet objective criteria.

2. What input has the CAP received from membership in designing this program?

Practicing pathologists who are CAP Fellows designed the CAP Certificate Program **with input from the CAP House of Delegates and CAP leaders**. The College's Board of Governors approved the program in 2008. On an ongoing basis, the program will be overseen by the *CAP Institute for Advancement of the Pathology Specialty*, which has broad member representation. Program planners will continue to seek input from CAP members on the development of certificate programs.

3. Who determines what CAP certificate recipients should know?

The CAP has assembled a working group of recognized expert practitioners for each of the AP specific CAP Certificate Programs. These individuals will define the knowledge and skills that CAP Certificate applicants are reasonably expected to possess and demonstrate. For other certificate programs, CAP Fellows and recognized expert practitioners define the knowledge and skills.

CAP Certificate Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

4. What are the requirements for enrolling in the CAP's Breast Pathology (BP) Certificate Program?

- American Board of Pathology (ABP) certification in AP or AP/CP or Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada or American Osteopathic Board of Pathology.
- Documented practice experience including review of 250 breast cases each year for the past three years. These include benign and malignant cases diagnosed primarily by the candidate, as well as any case presented at multidisciplinary breast conferences and those reviewed in intradepartmental and extradepartmental consultations. Different specimens obtained from the same patient represent separate cases. Pathologists are not required to sign out 250 cases per year to be eligible for this program.
- Completion of the CAP's BP curriculum (approximately 21.5 CME hours).
- Successful completion of cognitive assessment consisting of multiple choice questions.
- Participation in a practical assessment.

5. When will the Breast Pathology Certificate Program be offered?

It is anticipated that it will be offered Q1 of 2011.

6. How can I learn more?

As soon as the program manual is complete, it will be posted on cap.org/certificateprograms. If you have questions and/or concerns, you may contact the Division of Education at the CAP at certpro@cap.org.

7. If I obtain a Certificate of Special Expertise in breast pathology, does that mean I should sign out all breast cases in my group?

No. A CAP Certificate should not be required to practice within a subspecialty of pathology. The fact that one pathologist in a typical pathologist group has a CAP Certificate in breast pathology does not mean that this pathologist should interpret all breast biopsies. Rather, it assures external customers that the group includes at least one pathologist with added expertise in breast pathology and is available on-site for difficult cases and for helping colleagues remain conversant with current diagnostic and management thinking. The CAP does not support any institutional mandates that one or more pathologists in a group maintain certificates.

8. The CAP Certificate Program requires a certain amount of practice experience. Will the program disadvantage pathologists who are new in practice and cannot obtain certificates because they lack the required practice experience?

No. It is not expected that most pathologists who work in a subdiscipline of pathology will hold certificates in that discipline. Today, many pathologists interpret brain specimens, interpret cytology specimens, or oversee microbiology sections without ABP certification in neuropathology, cytopathology, or medical microbiology. The College has designed the Certificate Program to recognize expertise—the “go to” person in a pathology group or department. It is much more likely that recipients of CAP certificates will act as resources for their new-in-practice colleagues.

CAP Certificate Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

9. Does the CAP believe that a CAP Certificate should be required to practice pathology in a subspecialty?

No. For practice in the United States, the College believes that satisfactory completion of an accredited residency program, certification by the American Board of Pathology, the American Osteopathic Board of Pathology, or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in anatomic pathology (AP) or anatomic and clinical pathology (AP/CP), appropriate licensure and practice in an accredited laboratory qualify a pathologist to practice in all disciplines of anatomic and/or clinical pathology.

10. Does the CAP intend that CAP Certificates will become a new “floor” required of all pathologists?

No. The College has spent a great deal of effort designing a program to develop and recognize special expertise in subdisciplines of pathology, but it will not become a new floor required of all practitioners. Today, the American Board of Pathology (ABP) certifies specialists in transfusion medicine and cytopathology, but many pathologists manage blood banks or perform cytopathology without ABP certification. Groups of pathologists may find it advantageous to have a recognized local “expert” who holds a CAP certificate in a specialty area, but there is no expectation that every pathologist in the group who examines breast or colon biopsies will require a certificate. A valid state license and board certification are sufficient.