

A Note about the ABLS and ASLMS (American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery)

From time to time, the Board receives questions about the American Board of Laser Surgery, Inc. (ABLS) and The American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery, Inc. (ASLMS), and how the organizations are similar or different. To help avoid any confusion as there are similarities in the names, it is important to provide the distinction between our organization and the ASLMS.

- The ABLS, (founded in 1984) is a medical specialty board devoted to the preparation, testing and certification of qualified laser medical practitioners in the fundamental physics, bio-tissue interaction, and safety related to the use of lasers in medicine and surgery. The Board's certifications also extend to the fields of laser cosmetics and dentistry with additional study materials and examinations. We have several hundred Diplomates worldwide who have completed the Board's certification. We are highly regarded by our Diplomates as well as many organizations. *We are currently the only medical specialty board in the world devoted to laser medicine.*
- From the ASLMS website's "About" page: "*The American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery, Inc. (ASLMS) was founded in 1980 and is the world's largest professional organization dedicated to promoting research, education and high standards of clinical care in the field of medical laser and energy-based applications.*" The ASLMS is a well-regarded medical professional society and features annual meetings which provide many lectures and courses on the topics of lasers in medicine and surgery, as well as other educational and professional society activities. The ASLMS is a professional society with a key focus on education and teaching. It is not stated as a medical testing and certification board.

So the key difference is the ABLS is a medical specialty board while the ASLMS is a medical professional society. The ASLMS has offered a "Fundamentals of Lasers in Healthcare Course" at annual, or semi-annual, in-person meetings. The ABLS in our opinion provides a much more detailed treatment of laser physics, bio-tissue interaction and safety, as well as a more comprehensive series of examinations, both written and oral. In addition, the Board's certification does not require attendance at an in-person meeting nor the associated travel time and cost.

Both the ABLS and ASLMS are keenly interested in promoting high standards within laser medicine and surgery. In the opinion of the ABLS, both organizations have clear interests and roles in serving the good of laser medicine and surgery, and its practitioners.

Other Professional Associations and Societies

There are also many other excellent professional laser medical associations and societies around the world including the Laser Institute of America (LIA), the European Laser Association, the Australian Laser Medical Association, The Asian Pacific Association of Laser Medicine and Surgery, and the Academy of Laser Dentistry (ALD), to name just a few; and many other fine organizations devoted to furthering knowledge and efficacy in the laser medical field. In addition, many laser manufacturers also offer valuable training programs. The ABLS again is the *world's only medical specialty board* devoted to lasers in medicine and surgery. Hundreds of ABLS Diplomates have found the Board's certification process to be of great value for both new learning and to enhance the quality and safety of their laser practices!

Questions on Recognition

Questions also sometimes arise relative to recognition or inclusion of the ABLS by the ABMS (American Board of Medical Specialties). *The simple fact is that the ABMS does not recognize laser medicine as a separate specialty.* If you are reading this and practice laser medicine, the ABMS does not view *your field* as a medical specialty. Therefore, they have also not recognized that our field needs a board. In addition, while many professional societies exist both in the US and worldwide, these societies are based on a specialty that the ABMS doesn't to date consider a separate specialty.

The Board believes that this simply does not recognize the developments in laser medicine over the past three decades. The ABMS in fact has not recognized any new major medical boards (beyond its current 24) since the early 1990s. In addition, states in the US lack any consistency in regulating laser medicine, some with oversight and others with virtually none. Other countries vary greatly as well, with some having extensive requirements for laser medicine while others have little or none at all. When the ABLS was founded in 1984, we knew unequivocally that oversight, education, testing and certification are needed. So regardless of the ABMS and various levels of oversight, that does not diminish the need for, or the importance of, a medical specialty board devoted to the efficacious and safe use of lasers in medicine. Lasers are highly complex instruments, and the Board believes medical laser practitioners need to understand the details of how they work, through a process of rigorous study, and written and oral examinations.

There are many other important medical specialties and boards that the ABMS has also chosen not to recognize, but that make valuable contributions to medicine, its practitioners and patients. Among these are The American Board of Cosmetic Surgery, The American Board of Cosmetic and Aesthetic Medicine, The American Board of Aesthetic Medicine, The American Board of Anti-Aging / Regenerative Medicine, and others. *The most important reason for any certification is the knowledge gained and the ability to provide the best for patients.*

ABLS Recommendations for Sensible Oversight by US State Regulatory Bodies

The Board has developed a comprehensive open document provided to all 50 state medical authorities entitled: *"The Pressing Need for the Understanding of, and Regulations for, Lasers and Light Energy Devices as Used in Today's Cosmetic and Other Medical Procedures"*. We have this documented posted on our website, accessible via the link "[Oversight Recommendations](#)" on the left side of our Home Page. We are unique in having developed and disseminated this type of document! The Board currently provides the certifying examination for Advanced Aestheticians for the State of Oregon's Health Licensing Office (HLO).

Listing Board Credentials

How our Diplomates may refer to their ABLS credential, as in many aspects of listing or advertising professional medical credentials, depends on myriad regulations that exist across the 50 US states and US territories, as well as other countries. Some of the restrictions that exist in certain US states are politically motivated in our opinion. The ABLS encourages all Diplomates to proudly list their credential in a manner that complies with applicable state and local regulations. We encourage any Diplomat who feels unfairly treated to appropriately contact the appropriate body/authority and point out the legitimate need. And we stand to help!

The Board sincerely hopes this provides important information and clarification. Please email us at lasers1060@gmail.com for any further questions. Thank you very much.