

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. For example, we are approved by the Southern Medical Association (SMA) to offer *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™* as Continuing Medical Education; we have a working partnership with the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery (AACS); and we offer the accredited examination for advanced aestheticians for the State of Oregon. We have numerous relationships as the exclusive examination provider with both US and overseas laser education organizations and programs. *We are currently the only medical specialty board in the world devoted to medicine using lasers and other energy-based devices.* Hundreds of ABLS Diplomates over the past 30 years 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 medical practices!
- From the ASLMS website's "About ... Membership" page (as of Dec., 2022): "ASLMS is the world's largest professional organization dedicated to promoting excellence in patient care by advancing laser applications and related technologies." In the ABLS's opinion, the ASLMS is a highly-regarded medical professional organization and features annual meetings which provide many lectures and courses on various topics of lasers and other energy devices in medicine and surgery, as well as other educational and professional society activities. The ASLMS is a professional organization that hosts annual meetings, educational activities, publishes a journal and other related activities. *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 organization. The ASLMS has offered various Fundamentals of Laser courses in various healthcare specialties, at annual, semi-annual, and/or other 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 ABLS certification does not require membership fees in a professional society, attendance at an in-person meeting nor the associated travel time and cost.

We believe that the ABLS and ASLMS are both keenly interested in promoting high standards within laser and light energy medicine and surgery. In the opinion of the ABLS, both organizations have clear interests and roles in serving the overall good of laser and light energy medicine and surgery, and its medical practitioners.

Other Professional Organizations 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 and light energy medical field. In addition, many equipment manufacturers also offer valuable training programs.

Questions on Recognition

Questions 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 medical specialty.* If you are reading this and principally practice laser and light energy medicine, the ABMS does not view *your field* as a medical specialty. As a result, they have not recognized any medical board that principally deals with laser and light energy medicine. While many professional societies devoted to lasers and light energy devices exist both in the US and worldwide, these societies address a medical specialty that the ABMS doesn't to date consider a separate medical specialty.

The ABLS believes that this simply does not recognize the developments in laser and light energy 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, many states in the US lack any consistency in regulating laser medicine, some with good oversight and others with very little. Other countries also vary greatly as well, with some having extensive requirements for laser and light energy 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 were (and are) needed; and therefore it was important to have a medical specialty board devoted to the efficacious and safe use of lasers and light energy devices in medicine. Lasers for example 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 the various regulations that exist across the 50 US states and US territories, as well as other countries. The ABLS encourages all Diplomates to proudly list their credential in a manner that complies with applicable state and local regulations. We encourage any Diplomate who feels unfairly treated to contact the appropriate body or 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.