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PRESS RELEASE

Wilderness, Austere & Remote Medicine Board Certification for Paramedics

March 8, 2023 – The International Board of Specialty Certification (IBSC) announces the launch of the new Certified Wilderness Paramedic (WP-C) today.

In early 2021, the IBSC was approached by professionals from the wilderness medicine community including medical directors, regulators, clinicians, SAR teams, rescue squads, and EMS educators to discuss the need for the development of a specialty board certification for the paramedic/clinician operating in an austere, remote, and/or wilderness setting. The IBSC is excited to announce this exploratory group of subject matter experts (SMEs) worked diligently to create the framework for a board certification examination for the paramedic/clinician working in an austere, wilderness, and/or remote setting.



The pursuit of a specialty certification is linked to a National Association of EMS Physicians Wilderness EMS Committee project that outlined disparity between the skills needed to manage patients in wilderness EMS environments versus the various scope of practice traditionally approved by state EMS regulators (Millin et al 2017). That project defined the educational core content supporting the scopes of practice for wilderness EMS clinicians, as well as the conditions when the wilderness clinician requires medical oversight. By Delphi process, the authors identified the educational core content for four unique levels of wilderness EMS clinicians. There are identified as the Certified Wilderness Emergency Medical Responder (WR-C), Certified Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician (WEMT-C), Wilderness Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (WAEMT-C), and Certified Wilderness Paramedic (WP-C). These levels include specialized skills and techniques pertinent to the operational environment, with these skills and techniques increasing in complexity as more advanced certification levels address the unique circumstances patient care in the wilderness environment. The publication also defined the educational core content supporting specific scopes of practice each wilderness EMS clinician certification level should have when providing care in an austere, remote or wilderness setting. The IBSC purposely engaged subject matter experts (SMEs) from Australia, Canada, Germany, Malta, South Africa, Switzerland, and the United States to ensure an international standard was created.

Using our 7-step process, a role delineation study was completed, and a detailed content outline was created. An international group of item writers was engaged, and a beta version of the test form was evaluated. The new Board certification for remote, austere and wilderness paramedics will be released in the first quarter of 2023 and can be taken anywhere via Prometric testing centers or by live remote proctor. The WP-C is the fifth legally defensible and psychometrically

sound Board certification examination developed by the IBSC for specialty paramedic practice that is centered around existing educational curriculums currently offered around the world.

The IBSC worked with a group of subject matter experts including National Park Service Medical Director Dr. Will Smith. When asked about the importance of a Wilderness Paramedic Board Certification, Dr. Smith responded: “As an active pre-hospital EMS physician and as a medical director of clinicians in these environments, setting the standard is always beneficial for the end user – our patients! The WP-C Board certification is a means to standardize and validate the care provided to the patient by pre-hospital clinicians in the wilderness, austere, remote, or other similar setting across the globe. This process elevates the overall quality of care”.

Drs. Jeff Thurman and Benjamin Abo will be co-medical directors for the WP-C certification process.

Dr. Thurman, MD, FACEP, FAEMS, FAWM is an Emergency Medicine and EMS physician practicing in Kentucky. He completed training at the University of Louisville where he is now Gratis Faculty in the Division of EMS. He is board certified in both Emergency Medicine and EMS. Jeff is an active EMS medical director and is the co-Local Emergency Medical Advisor for the US Forest Service in Kentucky. He is also associate medical director for RedSTAR, a wilderness EMS response team, operating in Kentucky's Red River Gorge. Jeff is involved at the state level as a member of the Kentucky Board of EMS Medical Oversight committee and Wilderness Paramedic Task Force. He is part of the IBSC leadership team that created the first wilderness specific certification at the paramedic level (WP-C). He is also a member of the Wilderness Medical Society's Search & Rescue committee and the NAEMSP Wilderness EMS committee. He is a Fellow of the Academy of Wilderness Medicine (FAWM) and a Fellow of the Academy of Emergency Medical Services (FAEMS).

Dr. Benjamin Abo is an EMS physician and paramedic with over 26 years in emergency services throughout the globe. He trained at Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine in California and hold a master's degree in public health from Touro. He served as Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine & EMS at the University of Florida and is currently faculty at Florida State University. Dr. Abo is Medical Director for FEMA/Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Florida Task Force 1 Urban Search and Rescue, as well as several Fire/Rescue departments across Florida as well as primary investigator for Venom One and Venom Two Venom Response Units. He is an instructors/director for the Wilderness EMS Medical Directors Course and is past Chair of the National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP) Wilderness Medicine Committee. He has well published in emergency medicine and wilderness/austere EMS including marine technical rescue with subspecialty expertise in wilderness and austere medicine including toxicology and animal encounters. Furthermore, Dr. Abo continues to provide safety, rescue and concierge medical oversight for a variety of media productions including Shark Week, Nat Geo Wild, and Kings Of Pain.

The IBSC would like to thank following groups, schools, regulators, and individuals who participated in this project:

1. Groups:

- American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) Wilderness Medicine Interest Group
- Australasian Wilderness & Expedition Medicine Society
- Kentucky Board of EMS
- National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT)
- National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP) Wilderness EMS section
- National Association of Search and Rescue (NASAR)

Society of Academic Emergency Medicine (SAEM) - Wilderness Medicine Interest Group
University of California -Fresno
University of New Mexico (Mountain Medicine)
University of Utah
Wake Forest University Department of Emergency Medicine
Western Carolina University
Wilderness EMS Medical Director Course
Wilderness Medical Society

2. Schools:

AdventureMed
Base Medical
College of Remote and Offshore Medicine (CoROM)
Ragged Edge
SOAR Rescue – Remote Medical Practitioner
University of Tasmania
US Army Mountain Warfare School
Wilderness Emergency Medical Services Institute (WEMSI)
Wilderness Medicine Education Collaborative – NOLS, SOLO, Wilderness Medical Associates,
Aerie Backcountry Medicine, Wilderness Medicine Training Center, Desert Mountain Medicine

3. Regulators:

Colorado EMS
Kentucky EMS
Maine EMS Medical Director
Yukon (Canada) EMS

4. Individuals:

Aebhric O’Kelly – Malta	Michael Millin – Maryland
Andy Pennardt – Florida	Miles Randell – Canada
Ben Abo – Florida	Morgan West – Oregon
Dave Brown – Australia	Nicole Foster – Australia
Jack Grandey – North Carolina	Rohan Kilham – NSW
JD Graziano – Iowa	Steve Whitfield– Australia
Justin Padgett – North Carolina	Will Smith – Wyoming
Kerryn Wratt – Australia/New Zealand	William E. Brown, Jr. – Florida
Michael Klopper - South Africa	

About the International Board of Specialty Certification:

The IBSC Certified Flight Paramedic (FP-C®), Certified Critical Care Paramedic (CCP-C®) Certified Tactical Paramedic (TP-C®), Certified Tactical Responder (TR-C™), Certified Medical Transport Safety Professional (MTSP-C), Designated Infection Control Officer (DICO-C™) and Certified Community Paramedic (CP-C®) examinations are well established and have become a recognized standard for clinical competency by medical clinicians in the around the world. The IBSC is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accreditation body of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE). The NCCA Standards were developed to help ensure the health, welfare, and safety of the public. These standards highlight the essential elements found in a high-quality certification examination program.

Founded in 2000 as the Board for Critical Care Transport Paramedic Certification (BCCTPC®), the IBSC is a not-for-profit professional certification organization responsible for the administration and development of Board certification exams for paramedics and emergency services professionals. The mission of the IBSC is to improve quality of care in all aspects of

specialty certification across a wide variety of applications by providing a portfolio of certification exams that are an objective, fair, and honest validation of specialty knowledge to paramedics and other allied health clinicians working in specialty environments. Exams are developed that are responsive to the needs of the paramedic community. Currently, there are over 10,000 Board certified paramedics worldwide.

For additional information about the IBSC, contact:

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