Adding Value to Your Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (BCIA) Certification: A Q&A With the BCIA Board

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The Biofeedback Certification International Alliance (BCIA) receives tens of thousands of inquiries each year. Due to the many recent policy and product changes this year, this article targets some issues of greatest relevance to our applicants, certificants, and vendors in a question-and-answer format. Additional information about all of these topics is available at http://www.bcia.org.

The New Face of BCIA

Q: Is it true? Did BCIA really change its name?
A: Yes, at the annual Board meeting on March 28, 2010, in San Diego, the BCIA board unanimously agreed to change BCIA’s name from the Biofeedback Certification Institute of America to the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance.

Q: Why did BCIA change its name?
A: The BCIA Board hopes this change will (a) invite new alliances with individuals and groups in other countries; (b) advance and strengthen our field by promoting training, education, and effective evidence-based biofeedback and neurofeedback practice; and (c) encourage our international colleagues to become BCIA Board Certified.

Q: In addition to the U.S., from what other countries does BCIA have Board Certified professionals?
A: BCIA has Board Certified professionals in 19 countries, including: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, The Netherlands, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Taiwan, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the U.S.

Displaying and Marketing Your BCIA Credential

Q: As a BCIA certificant, how should I refer to myself and display my credential?
A: This year the BCIA Board announced new professional designations for BCIA certificants. We encourage all certificants to use the following terms and their associated abbreviations to refer to their BCIA credential:

- Board Certified in Biofeedback (BCB)™
- Board Certified in Neurofeedback (BCN)™
- Board Certified in Biofeedback–Pelvic Muscle Dysfunction (BCB-PMD)™

Use these terms on your Web site, business cards, professional correspondence, and advertising. Use the abbreviations behind your name (such as John Smith, PhD, BCB).

Q: What if I prefer to use the old abbreviation “BCIA-C” behind my name?
A: The BCIA Board understands a reluctance to change, especially if you have been using the same letters behind your name for many years, but we encourage you to embrace these new designations now. We have filed trademark applications with the U.S. Trademark Office for the three specific terms listed above.

Q: Why has the BCIA Board pursued trademarks?
A: Our certificants have asked us to enhance the value of their credential. After extended research and discussion, the BCIA Board concluded that the “Board Certified…”
terminology specified above will best communicate your expertise to the public, third-party payers, and other professionals. By securing trademark protection for this terminology, BCIA Board-Certified biofeedback and neurofeedback professionals now have exclusive rights to these terms, giving BCIA certificants the ability to preclude others, who might diminish or tarnish the good faith of these terms, from using them.

**BCIA Certification Options**

**Q:** May unlicensed providers become board certified in biofeedback and/or neurofeedback?

**A:** Yes. Everyone who meets entry-level BCIA certification criteria, including unlicensed providers, is eligible for certification. If unlicensed BCIA certificants want to treat medical or psychological disorders, they must work under legal supervision.

**Q:** I am an unlicensed provider and can meet all of the requirements for BCIA certification except for the college educational requirements. Is there another avenue for BCIA certification for me?

**A:** This year, BCIA has announced new certifications for Board Certified Biofeedback Technicians (BCB-T) and Board Certified Neurofeedback Technicians (BCN-T), designed for unlicensed technician-level providers who are working under legal supervision and for unlicensed optimal performance coaches.

**Q:** I am a biofeedback/neurofeedback researcher, educator, or supervisor who doesn’t see patients, so I don’t fit into the clinical model offered through traditional BCIA certification. Is there another avenue for BCIA certification for me?

**A:** This year, BCIA has announced new certifications for Board Certified Biofeedback Academics (BCB-A) and Board Certified Neurofeedback Academics (BCN-A), designed for nonclinical biofeedback professionals.

**Q:** I have been utilizing biofeedback and/or neurofeedback for many years and have developed advanced expertise in this field. The entry-level certification process is not appropriate for me. Is there another avenue for BCIA certification for me?

**A:** All BCIA certifications have a “Certification by Prior Experience” option that allows biofeedback and neurofeedback experts who have moved far beyond entry level in skill, knowledge, and experience an alternative route to becoming BCIA Board Certified in biofeedback and neurofeedback.

**Marketing Your Practice**

**Q:** Besides using the BCB and BCN behind my name, are there other ways that I may display my BCIA credential and use it to market my practice?

**A:** This year, the BCIA Board has made the BCIA logo available to all certificants, BCIA-accredited didactic education trainers, and BCIA-authorized organizations. The BCIA Board has developed Logo Usage Guidelines that specify how the logo may be used and who may use it. The guidelines and logos are posted in the Certificants Only area at http://www.bcia.org. There are several options available, including three color schemes and alternate forms with the “Board Certified…” designations surrounding the logo. We strongly encourage all BCIA certificants to display this visible proof of their skills and training in their marketing and business communication, including letterhead, business cards, Web site, and email.

**Q:** Are there other BCIA-related materials that I can use to market my practice?

**A:** The BCIA Board has recently posted a list of personal endorsements from prominent biofeedback and neurofeedback experts in the Certificants Only area at http://www.bcia.org. These endorsements are categorized by topic, such as neurofeedback treatment for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and biofeedback treatment for headache. These experts have generously made their personal endorsements freely available for use by you and your colleagues to market and promote our field. We hope that this endorsement list will continue to grow as additional experts participate.

**Q:** May I link to the BCIA Web site from my Web site?

**A:** Certainly. This helps your audience better appreciate the value of your certification.

**Q:** Can BCIA link back to mine?

**A:** Yes. You may create a link to your Web site in your expanded listing in the Find a Practitioner area by editing your personal profile in the Certificants Only area at http://www.bcia.org.

**BCIA Recertification**

**Q:** Continuing education (CE) through conferences and workshops can be expensive. Are there alternative ways to earn CE hours for BCIA recertification?

**A:** This year the BCIA Board has launched a new alternative for earning recertification CE hours. Specific BCIA blueprint–related articles from *Biofeedback:*
Clinical Journal, the Journal of Neurotherapy, and other relevant journals have been identified, and brief quizzes have been created. BCIA certificants can earn 1 hour of CE credit by reading an article and successfully passing the associated quiz at http://www.bcia.org/ce. The cost is $15 per quiz.

Q: Will CE credits be available for future articles?
A: Yes. In fact, this issue of Biofeedback: A Clinical Journal is the first publication in which CE credits are available for first-run articles. Relevant articles can be identified by a special version of the BCIA logo (see the Figure, which will appear at the top of the first page of the article).

New Recertification Policy Changes

Q: What are the current recertification guidelines?
A: Your certification expires on December 31, approximately 4 years after your original certification or your last recertification for biofeedback (BCB) and neurofeedback (BCN) and 3 years for pelvic muscle dysfunction biofeedback (BCB-PMD). The new fees and deadlines for BCB and BCN, beginning in 2010, are January 1–June 30, $225; July 1–October 31, $250; and after November 1, $275. The new fees and deadlines for BCB-PMD are January 1–June 30, $150; July 1–October 31, $175; and after November 1, $225. After December 31, your certification will lapse.

Q: Why were the fee deadlines changed?
A: The recertification rush at the end of each year puts a strain on staff resources and accounting. The Board believes that the new staggered fee deadlines will be a win-win for both Staff and BCIA certificants, allowing early-bird certificants to get the best rate and allowing the work for our staff to be more spread out over the year. These new fee deadlines will ensure that you continue to receive the prompt service you expect while we manage our year-end business.

Q: Is there a new ethics CE requirement?
A: Yes. The new requirement is 3 hours of accredited ethics CE course work for every recertification period.

Q: How may I satisfy this requirement?
A: Many affordable ethics courses are offered online and at regional professional conferences. For licensed BCIA certificants, you may use the same ethics CE credits that you earn for your state licensing requirements. The Certificants Only area of the BCIA Web site lists vendors who offer biofeedback-specific ethics modules through distance learning. You may also earn ethics CE by reading a series of specially selected, ethics-specific articles that are available online and then completing short online quizzes on their content at http://www.bcia.org/ce (using the same model as mentioned previously in the section on recertification).

Q: Why did BCIA add ethics to the CE requirements for certification?
A: Most state licensing boards require ethics training with each license renewal. To help maintain the highest professional standards for BCIA certificants, the BCIA Board has chosen to follow suit. BCIA’s mission statement reads: “BCIA certifies individuals who meet education and training standards in biofeedback and progressively recertifies those who advance their knowledge through continuing education.” We want our certificants to expand their knowledge of professional ethics as they increase their didactic knowledge of biofeedback and neurofeedback. This increases the credibility of our credential and helps to protect both consumers and our certificants.

The BCIA Public Information Office (PIO)

Q: What is the new BCIA PIO “watchdog” program and how can I get involved?
A: The BCIA PIO was created to take advantage of the free marketing that biofeedback and neurofeedback are receiv-
ing in the mainstream media. The PIO watchdog program is designed to directly address misinformation and/or lack of information about biofeedback and neurofeedback in mainstream publications. The BCIA Board has asked that BCIA certificants refer biofeedback- and neurofeedback-relevant articles directly to watchdog@bcia.org. The PIO will share these articles with all BCIA certificants in periodic eblasts. This will allow all BCIA certificants who wish to participate to send a response to the editors of these articles, informing them of misinformation or lack of information or to praise them for a good job of representing biofeedback and neurofeedback. Template response letters, in several different versions, are posted on the BCIA Web site to help facilitate certificant responses.

Using the appropriate template letter to encourage a high-volume response may let editors know that there is interest in this topic and perhaps a future article or formal correction could be considered. Your feedback might even be printed, as can be seen in many magazines, under “Letters to the Editor.” The BCIA Board encourages all certificants to get involved by emailing electronic links to articles that you have identified to watchdog@bcia.org and to submit your response letters directly to these publications as often as possible.

**BCIA Mentoring for BCIA Board Certification**

**Q:** As a BCIA certificant, how may I become a BCIA-approved mentor?

**A:** Any BCIA certificant who has been in active clinical practice for a minimum of 2 years (not necessarily certified for a minimum of 2 years) may become an approved mentor by filing an application for review.

**Q:** As an applicant for BCIA certification, how can I find a mentor?

**A:** Mentors can be identified through referral from a colleague, word of mouth, or through the BCIA Board Certified Practitioner Directory on the BCIA Web site. Mentoring is a very special relationship between a more skilled clinician and a student new to this field. When choosing a mentor, BCIA applicants should consider the provider’s professional background, client base, and time availability to make a good match.

**Q:** May I have more than one mentor?

**A:** Yes. You can greatly benefit from several mentors’ unique perspectives and strengths.

**The BCIA Job Board**

**Q:** Does it cost to post a job opening on the BCIA Job Board?

**A:** Job postings are free. Simply send in the details to info@bcia.org.

**Q:** Does it cost to respond to a BCIA Job Board listing?

**A:** No, this is a free service for our certificants.

**Conclusion**

BCIA’s new name, trademarked professional designations, new certifications, release of the logo, expert endorsements, new continuing education options, ethics requirement, the PIO, and the job board are exciting BCIA initiatives that deliver value to our certificants and ensure that our professionals are “More than qualified, BCIA Board Certified!”

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