

UHMS Credentialing and Privileging Guidelines For Hyperbaric Medicine Physicians in the U.S.A.

Principles Intrinsic to Ensuring Patient Access to Safe, High-Quality Hyperbaric Oxygen (HBO₂) Therapy

HBO₂ therapy entails medical risks and should be provided only by physicians with specialized training in hyperbaric medicine and facilities properly equipped and maintained to do so. For physicians, experience in both routine and emergent HBO₂ treatment situations is expected. For facilities, formal accreditation through a facility accreditation program recognized by the Joint Commission, such as the UHMS accreditation program, is recommended. A 5-year transition period is recommended to enable all hyperbaric medicine physicians and facilities to meet these certification, privileging and accreditation guidelines. However, during this transition period, patient access to HBO₂ therapy for approved indications should not be limited.

Minimum Physician Training, Experience and Certification

Hyperbaric medicine physicians must possess:

- An unrestricted medical license as required for the location of their hyperbaric medicine practice
- Board Certification in a primary discipline of medicine that reflects local medical staff standards
- Current certification in Advanced Cardiac Life Support
- For each of the following specified categories of practice, advanced training and experience in hyperbaric medicine as evidenced by:
 - **For Supervised and Proctored Practice:** The minimum requirement is one or both of the following:
 - UHMS-Approved Hyperbaric Medicine Introductory Course completion (a minimum of 40 hours on-site)
 - Current participation in an accredited Undersea and Hyperbaric Medicine (UHM) Fellowship or UHMS Program for Advanced Training in Hyperbarics (PATH).
 - **NOTE:** This is a restricted form of practice. It is expected that physicians in this category will advance in their formal education toward independent practice within five years.
 - **For Independent Practice:** This category requires certification in hyperbaric medicine by an institution independent of the UHMS (or any other hyperbaric medicine organizations) that is recognized nationally and internationally for conferring physician certifications in primary medical specialties. Accordingly, the following certifications are acceptable:
 - **Board Certification or Board eligibility in UHM** conferred by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) or the UHM CAQ conferred to Osteopathic Physicians by the American Osteopathic Board of Preventive Medicine (a process parallel to ABMS certification). Certification through the ABMS or the AOBMS remains the gold standard for hyperbaric medicine physicians.
 - **UHMS Program for Advanced Training in Hyperbarics (PATH):** The PATH does not replace fellowship training or board certification in UHM, which is considered the gold standard for training in undersea and hyperbaric medicine. The CAQ/CAE is intended to demonstrate that a candidate has completed a formal education program covering advanced topics in UHM, as well as having submitted clinical cases for formal review.
 - **As an Expert in Hyperbaric Medicine:** In the United States, the UHMS recognizes a higher level of expertise, a designation generally limited to physicians who have achieved both certification in hyperbaric medicine by the American Board of Medical Specialties or the Osteopathic equivalent but also have achieved peer recognition for their hyperbaric medicine expertise and experience (as evidenced by their leadership in publication and education). Additionally, the UHMS recognizes physicians in this category as advanced trained experts who are ideally suited to act as hyperbaric facility medical directors and/or proctors for those physicians restricted to supervise or proctored hyperbaric medicine practice.
 - **“Experienced Provider Exception”:** The UHMS recognizes that credentialing is the purview of the local medical staff. Although certification is preferred, local credentialing bodies may waive this requirement by approving an exception (with or without restrictions on privileges) for experienced hyperbaric medicine physicians with a documented minimum of 10 years’ experience providing HBO₂ therapy for approved treatment indications.

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Other Issues Applicable to Scope of Practice and Privileges

Privileging should be commensurate with both the hyperbaric medicine physician's credentials and the practice pattern and capabilities of the hyperbaric facility. The granting of restricted privileges is appropriate for physicians without hyperbaric medicine certification or advanced training. Hyperbaric medicine privileges should specify the range of approved indications, chamber types, and degree of patient complexity (e.g. stable, complex, critically ill, ventilated, adult, or pediatric) and the details of any restriction, supervision or proctorship requirements.

Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Reappointment

For initial appointment or reappointment, hyperbaric medicine physicians must complete a minimum of either 10 hours of hyperbaric medicine specific category 1 CME each year or a total of 30 hours of CME within the preceding 3-year period. If local requirements or the requirements of certification agencies exceed these standards, the CME requirements of the physician's certification and privileging agencies should be followed.