

MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

BILL NUMBER: SB 639
 AUTHOR: Limón
 BILL DATE: June 26, 2024, Amended
 SUBJECT: Medical Professionals: Course Requirements
 SPONSOR: Alzheimer’s Association

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT LEGISLATION

Updates continuing medical education (CME) requirements to encourage physicians to pursue courses on “the special care needs of patients with dementia” by adding that topic to an existing CME requirement for general internists and family physicians with a substantial patient population aged 65 years or older. Adds a similar requirement for nurse practitioners (NP) and physician assistants (PA).

BACKGROUND

CME is intended to maintain, develop, or increase the knowledge, skills, and professional performance that a physician and surgeon uses to provide care, or to improve the quality of care provided to their patients. [Business and Professions Code \(BPC\) section 2190.1](#) provides for many of the statutory requirements related to CME. Among other provisions, this section provides requirements that CME providers must follow to include curriculum related to cultural and linguistic competency in the practice of medicine in all coursework.

[BPC section 2190.3](#) states that all general internists and family physicians who have a patient population of which over 25 percent are 65 years of age or older shall complete at least 20 percent of all mandatory continuing education hours in a course in the field of geriatric medicine or the care of older patients.

Accreditation organizations, like the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), accredit CME providers and help ensure the coursework they offer is “relevant, practice-based, effective, based on valid content, and independent of commercial influence.”¹

At the time of renewal, physicians must certify under penalty of perjury that they have met the 50-hour CME requirement for that renewal period. Typically, Board staff audit

¹ <https://www.accme.org/accreditation-rules>

five percent of the physicians who renew their license each month to verify that they met CME requirements.

ANALYSIS

According to the author's fact sheet:

“Primary care physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants are increasingly integral in early detection, diagnosis, and care for the aging population. However, 50% believe that the medical profession is not equipped to handle this [demand](#). Studies have identified the barriers to diagnosing dementia in primary care, including lack of time, resources, and education.

Physicians have reported challenges with accessing and communicating with specialists, connecting with services, and managing patient and family preferences due to a lack of [training](#). Ensuring our healthcare workforce is adequately prepared to provide dementia care is especially critical given the severe shortage of dementia care specialists.”

As it pertains to the Medical Board of California, SB 639 would amend BPC section 2190.3 to read, as follows (language proposed to be added in **bold underline**):

All general internists and family physicians who have a patient population of which over 25 percent are 65 years of age or older shall complete at least 20 percent of all mandatory continuing education hours in a course in the field of geriatric medicine, **the special care needs of patients with dementia**, or the care of older patients.

This change would provide physicians currently subject to BPC section 2190.3 additional flexibility to meet that requirement by specifying that they may take courses focused on the care needs of those with dementia.

Concerns from PA and NP Licensing Boards

The Physician Assistant Board and Board of Registered Nursing adopted an Oppose position on SB 639, citing concerns about dictating the continuing education content for their licensees, indicating that they should be chosen by the licensee or employer, thereby helping to ensure they meet the needs of the setting where they work.

Consideration of a Board Position

SB 639 modestly updates an existing CME requirement for certain physicians and is not expected to change the Board's workload associated with auditing a physician's compliance with CME requirements. SB 639 may help to further prepare physicians to meet the needs of patients with dementia, and arguably eases compliance with current law by authorizing additional courses to meet that requirement. Accordingly, staff recommend the Board adopt a Support position on this bill.

FISCAL: Minor, staff costs associated with updating the Board's website and audit letter content.

SUPPORT: California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
California Assisted Living Association
California Commission on Aging
California Collaborative for Long-term Services and Supports
Choice in Aging
Justice in Aging
LeadingAge California
Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

OPPOSITION: Board of Registered Nursing
Physician Assistant Board

ATTACHMENT: [SB 639, Limón – Medical Professionals: Course Requirements](#)
Version: 6/26/24 – Amended