

# Majority of internal medicine residency program directors misinterpret ABIM leave policies

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A recent nationwide survey of 279 internal medicine residency program directors showed that the vast majority did not correctly interpret the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) leave policies. While 51 percent of those surveyed said they understood ABIM's Leave of Absence and Vacation policy, most could not answer specific questions about the rules. These misunderstandings could lead to unnecessary extensions in residents' training programs. Findings from a brief research study are published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

When managing parental leave, program directors must balance resident needs with adherence to ABIM policies (as they understand them), and must minimize extensions of training that are required when residents take more leave than is permitted. As such, the Association of Program Directors and the Internal Medicine (APDIM) Survey Committee of the ABIM collaborated in an effort to assess [internal medicine](#) program directors' understanding of ABIM leave policies and their application to common scenarios, including parental leave.

The survey showed that about half of the program directors thought that they understood the policies, but their answers showed that they misinterpreted leave times as being shorter than they actually are. When presented with various scenarios for leave, the program directors rarely answered questions about them correctly. For example, when asked about a scenario where a resident asks for 8 weeks of maternity leave,

only 6.5 percent of program directors correctly chose not to extend training; 82.7 percent said they would extend training to follow ABIM [policy](#).

According to the authors, misunderstandings are of concern because many residents requesting leave worry about program extensions. Given the lack of clarity surrounding ABIM policies, the authors suggest that [parental leave](#) policies should be clarified.

**More information:** Kathleen M. Finn et al. Misinterpretation of the American Board of Internal Medicine Leave Policies for Resident Physicians Around Parental Leave, *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2019). DOI: [10.7326/M19-2490](https://doi.org/10.7326/M19-2490)

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