The 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health indicated that more than 20 million Americans live with a substance-use disorder—including 2 million Americans who have an opioid-use disorder—yet federal officials say that only 10% of those affected receive treatment for the condition.

The nation has only about 3,500 physicians trained in addiction medicine to meet that need. While medical schools and residency programs are working to address the shortage, the public health challenge of substance-use disorder requires more working physicians in the field in the near future.

In October 2015, addiction medicine became a subspecialty of the American Board of Preventive Medicine (ABPM). In an effort to address the needs of America’s patients, the AMA will look to work with the ABPM and the American Board of Addiction Medicine to provide a pathway for qualified physicians to practice in that subspecialty, thus improving access to care for patients with substance use disorder.

Delegates at the 2019 AMA Interim Meeting adopted policy to recognize the ABPM for “developing and providing pathways for all qualified physicians to obtain certification approved by the American Board of Medical Specialties in the new ABPM subspecialty of addiction medicine, in order to improve access to care for patients with substance use disorder.”

The new policy also recognizes:

- The American Osteopathic Association Bureau of Osteopathic Specialists for “developing and providing a pathway for all qualified physicians to obtain subspecialty certification in addiction medicine, in order to improve access to care for patients with substance-use disorder.”
- The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) for “developing and providing a pathway for qualified physicians (DOs and MDs) with an active primary AOA board certification in any specialty to obtain subspecialty certification in addiction medicine, in order to improve
access to care for patients with substance-use disorder.”