You are about to begin the Clinical Self-Assessment (CSA) activity. Before you begin, just a few words regarding how the developers constructed the CSA and how much time you might expect to spend on a CSA. For each clinical area (e.g. hypertension), we created a “knowledge team” consisting of several practicing family physicians, a content "expert" (either a family physician with special expertise in the area or a specialist), and a knowledge engineer. These teams created the structures needed to generate the virtual patients. These CSAs emphasize patient management rather than factual knowledge recall. The developers have relied as much as possible on nationally-accepted guidelines (e.g. ADA guidelines for diabetes, and JNC 8 for hypertension), and have focused on those management points supported by class A evidence in the SORT (Strength of Recommendation Taxonomy) rating system. Upon completing the CSA, you will receive feedback regarding management of the CSA; this feedback will include the level of evidence supporting each available assessment/management point.

We strongly encourage you to review the CSA tutorial before beginning. Although we have tried to make the system as "user friendly" as possible, familiarity with CSA operation will streamline the experience and minimize the time needed to complete the CSA. Experience from trials conducted in late 2003 and from Diplomate interactions this year indicates that you can expect to spend about 1½ to 2 hours to complete the CSA. You don't need to complete the CSA in one sitting; you can "Suspend", to return at a later time, but you must return within a week to keep this patient active. After one week of inactivity, the CSA will be purged and you will have to start over.

The CSA has two methods for acquiring information: buttons on which the user "clicks", and text entry. As you will see in the tutorial, clicking on the appropriate label in the right-hand column of the screen yields information related to that label (e.g. clicking on "ROS" gives you access to review of systems information). You may also enter queries as text in the text box at the bottom of the screen. The system processes these text queries differently depending on where you are in the CSA: while performing the history and physical examination, a text query will yield a specific response if a perfect match to your query occurs; otherwise you will see a list of possible matches from which to choose. When you begin treatment of the patient, things work a bit differently. The system won't respond to a treatment request like "ACE inhibitor." You need to request a specific treatment (e.g. "lisinopril" or "Prinivil"). Also, if you don't get a response with a generic drug name, try the brand name. The system will then list the dose forms available for that medication. Similarly, to access dietary interventions, simply enter "diet" in the text box. "Education" yields the available patient education plans, and "exercise" returns possible exercise plans. When ordering treatments, single words will yield more options than longer phrases.

The Clinical Self-Assessment Activity has been designed to take an average of 1-2 hours to complete, and you will receive 4 prescribed CME credits for completing the CSA. Please note that CME credit is not available to Residents.