



Hospice and Palliative Medicine

Certification Examination Blueprint

What Does the Examination Cover?

The exam is designed to evaluate the extent of the candidate's knowledge and clinical judgment in the areas in which a **physician practicing hospice and palliative medicine** should demonstrate a high level of competence. Expertise in the broad domain of **Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM)** and the diagnosis and treatment of both common and rare conditions that have important consequences for patients, will be assessed.

Exam content is consistent with a pre-established blueprint, or table of specifications. The blueprint is developed by the Subspecialty Board on **Hospice and Palliative Medicine** and is reviewed and revised annually to ensure that it is current. In addition, practicing physicians in HPM, HPM trainees, and training program directors are surveyed periodically to provide feedback on the blueprinting process. The blueprint is used as a guide in developing the exam.

The majority of questions (over 75 percent) are based on patient presentations occurring in settings that reflect current medical practice. Questions requiring simple recall of medical facts are in the minority; the majority of questions require integration of information from several sources, prioritization of alternatives, and/or utilization of clinical judgment in reaching a correct conclusion. Some questions require interpretation of pictorial material, such as imaging studies (including radiographs, computed tomograms, and magnetic resonance images).

Topics covered may include the following:

- Approach to care, including relief of symptoms, bereavement care, and treating the family and patient as a unit of care
- Cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and psychiatric considerations of the patient and the family, including during grief and bereavement
- All aspects of the management of impending death
- Medical management of pain, of common conditions (such as dysphagia, pruritus, and skin breakdown), and of urgent conditions (such as agitated delirium and acute airway obstruction)
- The ethical and legal aspects of decision-making, and effective communication with co-workers, patients, and families
- Prognostication and the natural history of serious illness
- General medicine as encountered in the practice of hospice and palliative medicine (including hospice and palliative care of both adult and pediatric patients)

The content areas covered and their relative proportions on the exam are as follows:

Medical Content Category	Relative Percentage
Approach to care	9.0%
Psychosocial and spiritual considerations	11.0%
Impending death	9.0%
Grief and bereavement	5.0%
Medical management	45.0%
Communication and teamwork	6.0%
Ethical and legal decision-making	7.0%
Prognostication and natural history of serious illness	8.0%
Total	100%

Content Outline of the Certification Examination

This content outline describes a *typical* **Hospice and Palliative Medicine** Certification Examination; actual content on a specific examination may vary. Each medical content category from the examination blueprint is listed in boldface below, along with target blueprint percentage and total number of questions in the category. Within each category, the approximate distribution of questions in specified areas is also listed.

Medical Content Category (Relative Percentage)	Number of Questions
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Approach to Care (9.0%)	(Approximately 21 questions)
Components	
Care settings and resources	
Hospice Medicare benefit	

Psychosocial and Spiritual Considerations (11.0%)	(Approximately 26 questions)
Psychosocial considerations	
Spiritual issues	

Impending Death (9.0%)	(Approximately 21 questions)
Manifestations	
Prognostication	
Management	

Grief and Bereavement (5.0%)	(Approximately 12 questions)
Anticipatory grief	
Normal grief and bereavement patterns	

Complicated grief and bereavement patterns	
Loss history	
Therapeutic interventions	
Needs of bereaved minor children	

Medical Management (45.0%)	(Approximately 110 questions)
Pain	
Other common conditions	
Urgent medical conditions	
Additional management strategies	
Palliative sedation	
Discontinuation of technologic support	

Communication and Teamwork (6.0%)	(Approximately 14 questions)
Communication skills	
Family-centered approach	
Dynamics of interdisciplinary care	
Physician leadership	

Ethical and Legal Decision-Making (7.0%)	(Approximately 17 questions)
Decision-making	
Patient rights	
Ethics of physician/patient relationship	
Professionalism	
Burnout	
Coma	

Prognostication and Natural History of Serious Illness (8.0%)	(Approximately 19 questions)
Cancer	
Cardiovascular	
Pulmonary disease	
Multi-organ dysfunction syndrome	
Stroke	
Dementia	
Frailty	
Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis	
Perinatal and infant death	
Renal failure	
Unintentional injury and trauma	
Pediatric neurologic conditions	