



Medical Oncology

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 Medical Oncologist should demonstrate a high level of competence. Expertise in the broad domain of Medical Oncology 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 Medical Oncology and is reviewed and revised annually to ensure that it is current. In addition, practicing medical oncologists, medical oncology 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, or utilization of clinical judgment in reaching a correct conclusion. Some questions require interpretation of pictorial material, such as imaging studies (including radiographs) and photomicrographs.

Topics covered may include the following:

- Detection and diagnosis, staging, and natural history of neoplastic diseases, including genetic markers
- Patient treatment, including supportive and palliative care, and assessment of alternative therapies
- Treatment regimens and methods, including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormonal therapies, and biologic response modifiers
- Effects of disease and of treatment on the patient, including psychosocial and psychological issues
- Treatment of the geriatric cancer patient
- Ethics and end-of-life decisions
- The biology, etiology, and epidemiology of neoplastic disease, including screening and prevention
- Interpretation of statistics and clinical trials
- Indications for and effects of autologous and allogeneic bone marrow transplantation, including use of peripheral blood progenitor (stem) cells
- General internal medicine as encountered in the practice of medical oncology (including some general pediatrics with an emphasis on adolescent medicine)

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

Medical Content Category	Relative Percentage
Hematologic Neoplasias	12%
Thoracic Cancer	10%
Breast Cancer	12%
Genitourinary Cancer	11%
Gynecologic Cancer	6%
Gastrointestinal Cancer	12%
Other Solid Tumors	7%
Pharmacology, Cancer Biology, and Clinical Research Methodology	14%
Supportive Care and Ethics	11%
Head, Neck, and Thyroid	2%
Genetics and Tumor Biology	3%
Total	100%

Content Outline of the Certification Examination

This content outline describes a *typical* Medical Oncology 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 the 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
Hematologic Neoplasias (12%)	23–25 as follows:
Acute leukemia and myelodysplasia	5–7
Chronic myeloid leukemia and myeloproliferative disorders	3–5
Hairy cell leukemia	0–1
Hodgkin lymphoma	1–3
Multiple myeloma and plasma cell dyscrasias	3–5
Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	6–8

Thoracic Cancer (10%)	19–21 as follows:
Lung cancer	15–17
Mesothelioma (pleural)	1–3
Thymic cancer	1–3

Medical Content Category (Relative Percentage)	Number of Questions
Breast Cancer (12%)	23–25 as follows:
Epidemiology	0–2
Pathogenesis, pathology, and tumor biology	2–4
Prevention and screening	1–3
Diagnosis, staging, and prognostic factors	3–5
Treatment by stage	10–12
Follow-up	2–4

Genitourinary Cancer (11%)	21–23 as follows:
Bladder and other urothelial cancers (ureter, renal, pelvis)	4–6
Germ cell tumors	3–5
Prostate cancer	7–9
Renal cell cancer	4–6

Gynecologic Cancer (6%)	11–13 as follows:
Cervical cancer	2–4
Ovarian cancer	4–6
Uterine (endometrial) cancer	2–4
Cancers of the vulva and vagina	0–2

Gastrointestinal Cancer (12%)	23–25 as follows:
Anal cancer	0–2
Biliary tree and gallbladder cancer	1–3
Colorectal cancer	9–11
Esophageal cancer	1–3
Gastric cancer	1–3
Hepatocellular cancer	1–3
Neuroendocrine (carcinoid) tumors	1–3
Pancreatic cancer	2–4

Other Solid Tumors (7%)	13–15 as follows:
Bone and soft-tissue sarcomas	3–5
Central nervous system malignancies	3–5
Melanoma	3–5
Unknown primary site	1–3

Pharmacology, Cancer Biology, and Clinical Research Methodology (14%)	27–29 as follows:
Basic principles in the management and treatment of cancer	23–25
Clinical research	3–5

Medical Content Category (Relative Percentage)	Number of Questions
Supportive Care and Ethics (11%)	21–23 as follows:
Treatment-related issues	3–5
Complications	3–5
Supportive care	3–5
Survivorship	2–4
Psychosocial aspects of cancer	2–4
Bioethical, legal, and economic issues	1–3
Communication skills	1–3

Head, Neck, and Thyroid (2%)	3–5 as follows:
Salivary gland tumors	0–2
Head and neck cancers	1–3
Thyroid cancer	0–2

Genetics and Tumor Biology (3%)	5–7 as follows:
Basic scientific principles	5–7