



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS REGARDING SLEEP MEDICINE CERTIFICATION

Sleep Medicine Certification, jointly developed by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM), the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM), the American Board of Pediatrics (ABP), the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) and the American Board of Otolaryngology (ABOto) is designed to recognize the qualifications of physicians who have met the standards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) for specialists in sleep medicine. The certification examination is administered by ABIM.

1. I'm certified by the American Board of Sleep Medicine (ABSM), and I would like to take the 2011 Sleep Medicine Certification Examination. What should I do?

If you are certified by ABIM, all you need to do is register for the 2011 examination and select the application pathway for ABSM diplomates (Practice Pathway B). Once you submit your application, you don't need to submit any further documentation of your practice experience in sleep medicine. ABIM will independently confirm your ABSM diplomate status.

If you are certified by ABFM, ABP, ABPN or ABOto, please contact your primary board for specific information about their application processes and deadlines.

2. I'm certified by ABSM. Does this mean I am renewing my certificate with ABIM?

No. ABSM is not a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), so in order to achieve Sleep Medicine Certification, you will need to take and pass the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination, administered by ABIM. However, for the 2011 administration of the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination, ABSM diplomates can be admitted to the examination without having to complete fellowship training or further document their practice experience in sleep medicine.

3. I hold ABSM certification. Why should I take the ABIM-administered exam?

Your ABSM certificate is time-unlimited, and the ABIM-administered Sleep Medicine Certification Examination will not affect that status. However, by adding this new certification to your list of credentials, you demonstrate to peers and patients alike that you are staying current with the growth of information relevant to your practice.

The new certification was created in a joint effort by five member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), a not-for-profit organization, which assists 24 approved medical specialty boards in the development and use of standards in the ongoing evaluation and certification of physicians. ABMS, recognized as the "gold standard" in physician certification, believes higher standards for physicians means better care for patients.

Note that the Practice Pathway that allows ABSM diplomates to be admitted to the ABIM-administered Sleep Medicine Certification Examination is available for a limited period of time. Once Practice Pathways for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination are discontinued, all first-time applicants will need to complete fellowship training.

If you are not admitted to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination while Practice Pathways are available, you will need to complete at least 12 months of ACGME-accredited clinical sleep medicine fellowship training in order to be eligible to apply for admission to the examination, even if you would have qualified for the Practice Pathway while it was available.

4. When will the Practice Pathway close?

After the Fall 2011 examination administration, Practice Pathways for application to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination will close to first-time applicants. Those who were admitted to the examination via Practice Pathways but were unsuccessful would be subject to their primary board's Re-Examination Policy, if applicable. ABIM's Re-Examination Policy currently states:

“Candidates who are unsuccessful on an examination may apply for re-examination. To be granted admission, candidates must meet all applicable licensure, professional standing and procedural requirements. As long as these requirements are met, there is no restriction on the number of opportunities for re-examination.”

Everyone who is a first-time applicant for the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination administered by ABIM after 2011 will need to have satisfactorily completed the requirements of the Training Pathway, which are 12 months of ACGME-accredited sleep medicine fellowship training.

5. What if I take the 2011 exam and fail?

If you are certified by ABIM, are admitted to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination and are unsuccessful, you would fall under ABIM's Re-Examination Policy, which currently states:

“Candidates who are unsuccessful on an examination may apply for re-examination. To be granted admission, candidates must meet all applicable licensure, professional standing and procedural requirements. As long as these requirements are met, there is no restriction on the number of opportunities for re-examination.”

ABIM diplomates admitted to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination under Practice Pathways who are unsuccessful can continue to apply for admission to the examination without completing fellowship training, even after Practice Pathways are discontinued.

Diplomates of ABFM, ABP, ABPN, and ABO should consult their primary boards to about the specific details of their board's Re-Examination Policy, if available.

6. I'd like to apply for admission to the 2011 Sleep Medicine Certification Examination without completing fellowship training, but I'm not certified by ABSM. Can I still apply?

If you are certified by ABIM, there is an alternate Practice Pathway for application for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination for those who have had no formal sleep medicine fellowship training but have had acceptable practice experience (Practice Pathway A). This pathway is intended for established practitioners in the field who have not have the opportunity to complete formal fellowship training. It is not intended for recent trainees.

Current ABIM diplomates are eligible to apply for admission to the Fall 2011 Sleep Medicine Certification Examination if, at the time that they apply, they can document:

- 12 months of full-time post-training practice experience in sleep medicine providing clinical care to patients with sleep disorders.
- A minimum procedural experience of evaluating 400 individual patients, and reading 200 polysomnograms and 25 MSLTs.
- The documentation period for this experience is a maximum of five years prior to application.

Note: This pathway is not available to those who complete fellowship training after June 1, 2010.

If you are certified by ABFM, ABI, ABPN or ABOto, please contact your primary board for specific information about their practice pathways for non-ABSM diplomates.

7. I've treated 400 individual patients, read 200 polysomnograms and 25 MSLTs. Can I apply for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination via the Practice Pathway?

Only if you have also completed 12 months of full-time post-training practice experience in sleep medicine between 2006 and the time that you apply in 2011. The requirements above are the procedural requirements for application for the examination. Those requirements are what the Sleep Medicine Test and Policy Committee established as the minimum procedural experience that could be achieved during 12 months of full-time post-training practice experience in sleep medicine. Thus, both the 12-month practice experience requirement AND the procedural requirements must be met at the time of application.

If you are certified by ABFM, ABI, ABPN or ABOto, please contact your primary board for specific information about their practice pathways for non-ABSM diplomates.

8. Do I need to be supervised by someone who is certified in sleep medicine if I want to apply via the Practice Pathway?

Any independent sleep medicine practice can be counted toward the practice experience requirements for application to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination.

Please note for ABIM diplomates applying for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination that sleep studies from your patients for which you independently review the complete raw polysomnographic data and independently provide and interpretation and diagnosis can be counted toward the procedural requirements for admission to the examination. Sleep studies that are overread by another physician, or do not come from the applicant's patient base should not be counted toward the procedural requirement.

If you are certified by ABFM, ABP, ABPN or ABOto, please contact your primary board for specific information about whether or not practice experience in sleep medicine must be supervised by a Sleep Medicine-certified physician.

9. I finished my training in June 2009, am I eligible to apply for admission to the Fall 2011 Sleep Medicine Certification Examination via the Practice Pathway?

In order to be eligible to apply for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination via Practice Pathway A, you will need to be able to attest to having completed 12 months of full-time post-training practice experience in sleep medicine by the time of application, which will be open from March 1, 2011 through June 1, 2011 for ABIM diplomates.

If you are certified by ABIM and left training in June 2009, you would have a maximum of 23 months to fulfill the above practice experience requirements, less if you apply earlier in the application period. This means that you would need to spend more than half of your practice time in sleep medicine in order to fulfill the practice experience requirement for application to the examination by the final ABIM registration deadline.

Diplomates of ABFM, ABP, ABPN and ABOto should contact their primary board regarding their eligibility to apply for admission to the Fall 2011 Sleep Medicine Certification Examination.

10. I am finishing my training in June 2010, am I eligible to apply for admission to the Fall 2011 Sleep Medicine Certification Examination via the Practice Pathway?

No. Since the minimum practice experience requirements must be fulfilled at the time of application, ABIM diplomates leaving training on June 30, 2010 or after would only have a maximum of 11 months of practice time at the close of ABIM's registration period for the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination.

ABIM would encourage those leaving training June 30, 2010 to seek certification in Sleep Medicine via the Training Pathway, which involves satisfactory completion of 12 months of ACGME-accredited clinical sleep medicine fellowship training.

Diplomates of ABFM, ABP, ABPN and ABOto should contact their primary board regarding their eligibility to apply for admission to the Fall 2011 Sleep Medicine Certification Examination.

11. I did sleep medicine training during my residency/fellowship. Can I count that training toward the practice experience requirements for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination?

ABIM's policy is that training that was credited toward the training requirements for admission to one ABIM Certification Examination (e.g., Pulmonary Disease, Critical Care Medicine) cannot be credited toward the practice experience requirements for admission to another ABIM Certification Examination (including the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination, administered by ABIM), even if they were elective rotations.

Diplomates of ABFM, ABR, ABPN and ABOto should contact their primary board regarding the above question.

12. I'm in fellowship training finishing June 2010, but I want to apply for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination via the Practice Pathway. If I get the support of my program director, can I interrupt my fellowship training to do 12 months of sleep medicine practice?

No. The Practice Pathway is intended for those who are established practitioners of sleep medicine who have not had the opportunity to undertake formal sleep medicine fellowship training. It is not intended for recent trainees. The sleep medicine practice undertaken prior to or during the time period that you are completing fellowship training would not be at the level expected of applicants via the Practice Pathway. ABIM would encourage trainees in this situation to complete ACGME-accredited fellowship training in sleep medicine and apply for admission to the examination via the Training Pathway.

Diplomates of ABFM, ABR, ABPN and ABOto should contact their primary board regarding the above question.

13. How will I know if my sleep medicine training will qualify me for admission to the examination through the Training Pathway?

It depends on the year that you trained. Training undertaken prior to July 1, 2009 will be acceptable provided it is conducted within an institution that has a residency or fellowship program which is accredited by the ACGME, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, or the Professional Corporation of Physicians of Quebec. Sleep medicine fellowship training undertaken on or after July 1, 2009 must be accredited by ACGME.

14. Will the Training Pathway always be an option for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination?

Yes. The Training Pathway is a permanent pathway for admission to the examination. All first-time applicants for examinations given after 2011 must fulfill the requirements of the Training Pathway.

15. Will DOs be eligible to take the examination?

DOs who have completed both ACGME-accredited internal medicine residency training, have been certified in Internal Medicine by ABIM and are have fulfilled either the practice experience requirements or training requirements for application to the examination will be eligible to apply for admission to the Sleep Medicine Certification Examination through ABIM.

DOs certified by ABFM, ABP, ABPN or ABOto need to contact their primary certification board in order to determine their eligibility to apply for admission to the examination that ABIM is administering.

16. How do I register for the examination?

For ABIM diplomates, registration for the Fall 2011 Sleep Medicine Certification Examination will be conducted online via www.abim.org (Physician Login) from March 1, 2011 through May 1, 2011. Late fee registration is May 2 – June 1, 2011.

If you are certified by ABFM, ABP, ABPN or ABOto, you will need to contact your primary certification board for information about their specific application processes and deadlines.

17. How do I find out what type of information will be included in the examination? What is the format of the examination?

The Sleep Medicine Certification Examination will be a computer-based examination administered by Pearson VUE Professional Centers which has test centers throughout the United States and abroad. It will consist of four separate sections of two hours each with optional breaks between sections.

An examination blueprint, which lists topics that are likely to be covered on a typical examination, can be found at www.abim.org by clicking on Sleep Medicine using the “Get Information by Specialty” tab.

18. AASM recently published new guidelines and terminology for scoring sleep studies. Will the exam use the old rules or the new rules?

The new AASM sleep stage scoring terms will be used throughout the exam, so that stage 1 will be termed N1, stage 2 will be N2, stage 3/4 will be N3, and REM sleep will be R.

19. Once I take the examination, when will my results be available?

Typically, examination results are available within three months of the examination date. ABIM diplomates will receive an e-mail notification that the results of their examination are available via the Physician Login on www.abim.org, and a detailed score report will be mailed shortly after.

Those who are certified by ABFM, ABP, ABPN, ABOto will be notified of their examination results by their primary certification board, not by ABIM.

20. Will recertification be required to maintain the Sleep Medicine Certificate?

Yes.

Diplomates of ABFM, ABP, ABPN and ABOto will need to contact their primary board for information about how to maintain their Sleep Medicine certificates.

21. Who should I contact for more information?

If you are certified by ABIM, please contact:

ABIM Contact Center

Tel: 800-441-ABIM

E-mail: request@abim.org

If you are certified by ABFM, ABP ABPN or ABOto, please contact your primary certification board.



American Board
of Internal Medicine

510 Walnut Street | Suite 1700
Philadelphia, PA 19106 - 3699

1.800.441.ABIM | www.abim.org