**Purpose of the exam**

The exam is designed to evaluate the knowledge, diagnostic reasoning, and clinical judgment skills expected of the certified geriatrician in the broad domain of the discipline. The ability to make appropriate diagnostic and management decisions that have important consequences for patients will be assessed. The exam may require recognition of common as well as rare clinical problems for which patients may consult a certified geriatrician. The exam is developed jointly by the ABIM and the American Board of Family Medicine.

**Exam content**

Exam content is determined by a pre-established blueprint, or table of specifications, which is reviewed annually and updated as needed for currency. Trainees, training program directors, and certified practitioners in the discipline are surveyed periodically to provide feedback and inform the blueprinting process.

The primary medical content categories of the blueprint are shown below, with the percentage assigned to each for a typical exam:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Content Category</th>
<th>% of Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gerontology</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases in the Elderly</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geriatric Psychiatry</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geriatric Syndromes</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Assessment and Rehabilitation</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for Elderly Patients</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ABIM is committed to working toward health equity and believes that board-certified physicians should have an understanding of health care disparities. Therefore, health equity content that is clinically important to each discipline will be included in assessments, and the use of gender, race, and ethnicity identifiers will be re-evaluated.
Exam format

The exam is composed of up to 240 single-best-answer multiple-choice questions, of which approximately 40 are new questions that do not count in the examinee’s score. Most questions describe patient scenarios and ask about the work done (that is, tasks performed) by physicians in the course of practice:

- Making a diagnosis
- Ordering and interpreting results of tests
- Recommending treatment or other patient care
- Assessing risk, determining prognosis, and applying principles from epidemiologic studies
- Understanding the underlying pathophysiology of disease and basic science knowledge applicable to patient care

Clinical information presented may include patient photographs, radiographs, electrocardiograms, recordings of heart sounds, video, and other media to illustrate relevant patient findings. Learn more information on how exams are developed.

A tutorial including examples of ABIM exam question format can be found at http://www.abim.org/certification/exam-information/geriatric-medicine/exam-tutorial.aspx.

The blueprint can be expanded for additional detail as shown below. Each of the medical content categories is listed there, and below each major category are the content subsections and specific topics that may appear in the exam. Please note: actual exam content may vary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gerontology</th>
<th>5% of Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiology</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General principles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal physiologic changes with aging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical implications of age-related changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demography and epidemiology</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social determinants of health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Life expectancy
Determinants of health and longevity

**Psychology and sociology of aging**  <2%
- Stressors and coping strategies
- Social network and social involvement
- Spirituality
- Sexuality

**Interpretation of literature in context of aging**  <2%
- Study design
- Biostatistics
- Bias

**Medication issues in the elderly not related to specific conditions**  <2%
- Pharmacokinetics
- Pharmacodynamics
- Adverse reactions related to drug discontinuation in older adults

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diseases in the Elderly</th>
<th>45% of Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allergy</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allergic rhinitis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocular</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug allergy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other allergy topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cardiovascular</strong></td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythm disturbances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart failure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valvular heart disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cor pulmonale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pericardial diseases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthostatic hypotension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral arterial disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syncope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dermatology</strong></td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-malignant and malignant skin lesions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-malignant skin lesions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rashes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Infections
Blistering diseases
Pruritus
Chronic venous insufficiency

**Endocrinology** 4.5%
- Diabetes mellitus
- Metabolic syndrome
- Adrenal disorders
- Thyroid disorders
- Osteoporosis
- Disorders of calcium metabolism
- Vitamin D
- Diabetes insipidus
- Osteopenia
- Pituitary

**Gastroenterology** 2.5%
- Esophageal disorders
- Stomach and duodenum disorders
- Liver disorders
- Biliary tract disorders
- Pancreas disorders
- Small intestine (jejunum and ileum) disorders
- Colon disorders
- Gastrointestinal bleeding disorders

**Genitourinary and gender-specific disorders** 2%
- Male genitourinary disorders
- Gynecologic disorders
- Transgender health issues

**Hematology and oncology** 4%
- Hematology
  - Decreased blood cell counts
  - Increased blood cell counts
  - Coagulation disorders
  - Thrombotic disorders
- Hematologic malignancies
- Solid tumors, presentation
- Complications of malignancy
Infectious diseases 4%
  Atypical presentations
  Fever of unknown origin
  Respiratory infections
  Genitourinary
  HIV and AIDS
  Intra-abdominal and gastrointestinal
  Neurologic
  Bones and joints
  Miscellaneous infections
    Lyme disease
    Infestations
  Bacteremia and sepsis
    Endocarditis
    Other bacteremia and sepsis topics
  Drug-resistant and associated infections
    Common antibiotic resistance
    Vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus faecium* (VREF)
    Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)
    *Clostridioides (Clostridium) difficile*
    Extended-spectrum beta-lactamase-producing organisms

Nephrology 2.5%
  Hyponatremia
  Hypernatremia
  Acute kidney injury
  Chronic kidney disease
  Glomerular disorders
  Renovascular disease
  Tubulointerstitial nephritis
  Acid-base disorders
  Hypokalemia
  Hyperkalemia

Neurology 5%
  Cerebrovascular disease
  Seizures
  Neuromuscular disorders
  Headaches
  Myelopathies
Traumatic brain injury
Spinal cord injury
Dysphagia

**Oral health**
Dental caries
Periodontal diseases
Candidiasis
Xerostomia
Temporomandibular joint
Leukoplakia
Dentures
Nutritional deficiencies and oral health

**Pulmonary disease**
Asthma and bronchospasm
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
Interstitial lung diseases
Pulmonary thromboembolism
Pleural diseases
Acute respiratory failure
Occupational and environmental lung diseases
Other pulmonary disease topics (carbon monoxide poisoning, pulmonary hypertension)

**Rheumatology and musculoskeletal conditions**
Osteoarthritis
Musculoskeletal conditions
  - Bursitis and tendinitis
  - Fibromyalgia
  - Adhesive capsulitis (frozen shoulder syndrome)
  - Acute disk herniation
  - Vertebral compression fracture
  - Hip fracture
  - Lower extremity amputation
  - Lumbar stenosis
  - Cervical stenosis
  - Low back pain (acute and chronic)
  - Carpal tunnel syndrome
  - Fasciitis
  - Deconditioning
Other musculoskeletal condition topics
(compartment syndrome)
Crystal deposition disease
Arteritis and vasculitis
Rheumatoid arthritis
Systemic lupus erythematosus
Dermatomyositis and polymyositis
Amyloidosis
Systemic sclerosis
Foot and ankle conditions

**Ears, nose, and throat (ENT)**<2%
- Hearing loss
- Cerumen impaction
- Throat and laryngeal disorders (age-related vocal cord atrophy; submandibular mass; laryngopharyngeal reflux)

**Ophthalmology**<2%
- Macular degeneration
- Glaucoma
- Cataract
- Other ophthalmologic issues

---

**Geriatric Psychiatry** 8.5% of Exam

Major depressive disorder 3%
- Without psychotic features
- With psychotic features

Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia) <2%

Adjustment disorder  <2%

Bipolar disorder  <2%

Anxiety  <2%

Psychotic disorders  <2%

Substance use disorders <2%

Other psychiatric disorders <2%
- Personality disorders
- Somatoform disorders
- Serotonin syndrome
- Neuroleptic malignant syndrome

Suicide <2%
## Geriatric Syndromes  
22.5% of Exam

### Cognitive impairment  
6%
- Mild cognitive impairment
- Dementia 6.5%
  - Alzheimer disease
  - Dementia with Lewy bodies
  - Frontotemporal dementia
  - Vascular dementia
  - Other types of dementia
  - Other topics in dementia

### Behavioral disturbances
- Amnestic syndromes
- Other cognitive impairment topics
- Subjective memory concerns

### Delirium  
3%

### Dizziness and light-headedness  
<2%
- Vertigo
- Non-vertigo

### Falls (non-syncopal)  
3%

### Incontinence  
2%

### Pressure ulcers  
<2%

### Sleep disorders  
<2%

### Undernutrition and involuntary weight loss  
<2%

### Obesity and overweight  
<2%

### Frailty  
<2%

### Elder mistreatment  
<2%

### Deconditioning  
<2%

### Appropriate prescribing  
<2%

## Functional Assessment and Rehabilitation  
3% of Exam

### Assessment of disability  
<2%

### Assessment of rehabilitation potential  
<2%

### Aspects of rehabilitation  
<2%
- Interdisciplinary team
- Assistive devices
Adaptive equipment
Therapeutic modalities
Orthotics
Prosthetics
Environmental modifications

Rehabilitation settings <2%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caring for Elderly Patients</th>
<th>16% of Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preventive medicine</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lipid abnormalities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health behaviors and lifestyle issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary prevention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iatrogenic disorders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary, alternative, and integrative medicine</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic aspects of health care</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care delivery models</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based long-term care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional long-term care settings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition in care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-life models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical principles of care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case-based ethical dilemmas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance directives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrogate decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver and family concerns</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiver stress and burnout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to live alone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of finances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural aspects of aging</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of medical interpreters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues regarding patient preference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palliative care</strong></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain and other symptom management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States of reduced consciousness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospice benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals of care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

January 2024