Geriatric Medicine
Certification Examination Blueprint

**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>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Exam format

The exam is composed of multiple-choice questions with a single best answer, predominantly describing patient scenarios. Questions 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.

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](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>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physiology</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>General principles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Normal physiologic changes with aging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical implications of age-related changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demography and epidemiology</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living arrangements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determinants of health and longevity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Psychology and sociology of aging
Stressors and coping strategies
Social network and social involvement
Spirituality
Sexuality

Interpretation of literature in context of aging
Study design
Biostatistics
Bias

Medication issues in the elderly not related to specific conditions
Pharmacokinetics
Pharmacodynamics
Mechanism of action of medications
Adverse drug reactions undifferentiated to specific diagnosis
Other medication issues in the elderly (drug withdrawal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diseases in the Elderly</th>
<th>45% of Exam</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allergy</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allergic rhinitis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ocular</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug allergy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other allergy topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>(lymphoma-associated</td>
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<tr>
<td>angiodema; anaphylaxis)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cardiovascular</strong></td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhythm disturbances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart failure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valvular heart disease</td>
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<td>Cor pulmonale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pericardial diseases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atherosclerosis and</td>
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<tr>
<td>coronary artery disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
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<td>Orthostatic hypotension</td>
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<td>Peripheral arterial</td>
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<tr>
<td>disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Syncope</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dermatology</strong></td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun exposure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact dermatitis</td>
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<td>Drug reactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Photosensitivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xerosis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Atopic dermatitis
Infections
Seborrheic dermatitis
Psoriasis
Blistering diseases
Pruritus
Benign skin tumors
Acne rosacea
Onychomycosis (tinea unguium)
Chronic venous insufficiency

**Endocrinology**

Diabetes mellitus
Metabolic syndrome
Adrenal disorders
Thyroid disorders
Osteoporosis
Disorders of calcium metabolism
Vitamin D
Diabetes insipidus

**Gastroenterology**

Esophageal disorders
Stomach and duodenum disorders
Liver disorders
Biliary tract disorders
Pancreas disorders
Small intestine (jejenum and ileum) disorders
Colon disorders
Gastrointestinal bleeding disorders

**Genitourinary and gender-specific disorders**

Male genitourinary disorders
Gynecologic disorders

**Hematology and oncology**

Hematology
- Decreased blood cell counts
- Increased blood cell counts
- Coagulation disorders
- Thrombotic disorders
Hematologic malignancies
Solid tumors
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 (severe sepsis and organ dysfunction)
- Drug-resistant and emergent 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 hypertension
Pulmonary thromboembolism
Pleural diseases
Acute respiratory distress syndrome
Acute respiratory failure
Occupational and environmental lung diseases
Other pulmonary disease topics (carbon monoxide poisoning)

**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
  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
Paget disease of bone
Systemic sclerosis
Morton neuroma

Ears, nose, and throat (ENT) <2%
Hearing loss
Malignant otitis externa
Tympanic membrane perforation
Throat and laryngeal disorders (age-related vocal cord atrophy; submandibular mass; laryngopharyngeal reflux)

Ophthalmology <2%
Macular degeneration
Glaucoma
Vision loss
Keratoconjunctivitis sicca

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive impairment</th>
<th>6%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mild cognitive impairment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alzheimer disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dementia with Lewy bodies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frontotemporal dementia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vascular dementia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other types of dementia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Normal-pressure hydrocephalus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dementia of Parkinson disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV-associated dementia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other topics in dementia (clinical features; patient safety)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral disturbances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amnestic syndromes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other cognitive impairment topics (postoperative cognitive dysfunction)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Functional Assessment and Rehabilitation

| 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%

Caring for Elderly Patients  16% of Exam

Preventive medicine  4%
  Immunizations
  Screening
  Lipid abnormalities
  Health behaviors and lifestyle issues
  Secondary prevention
  Hospital care
  Iatrogenic disorders
  Other preventive medicine topics (obstructive sleep apnea)

Complementary, alternative, and integrative medicine  <2%

Economic aspects of health care  <2%

Health care delivery models  2%
  Delivery models
  Community-based long-term care
  Institutional long-term care settings
  Hospital Care
  Transition in care
  End-of-life models

Ethics  <2%
  Ethical principles of care
  Case-based ethical dilemmas

Decision making  <2%
  Advance directives
  Surrogate decision making
  Decision-making capacity

Caregiver and family concerns  <2%
  Caregiver stress and burnout
  Inability to live alone
  Driving
  Management of finances

Cultural aspects of aging  <2%
  Use of medical interpreters
  Issues regarding patient preference
End-of-life care

- Pain and other symptom management
- States of reduced consciousness
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) outcomes
- Hospice benefit
- Palliative care
- Goals of care
- Communication

January 2021