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>
</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.

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>
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<tr>
<td>Physiology</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normal physiologic changes with aging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clinical implications of age-related changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demography and epidemiology</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age groups</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Living arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic characteristics</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**
- 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)

### Diseases in the Elderly  45% of Exam

**Allergy**
- Allergic rhinitis
- Ocular
- Drug allergy
- Other allergy topics (lymphoma-associated angiodema; anaphylaxis)

**Cardiovascular**
- Rhythm disturbances
- Heart failure
- Valvular heart disease
- Cor pulmonale
- Pericardial diseases
- Atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease
- Hypertension
- Orthostatic hypotension
- Peripheral arterial disease
- Syncope
Dermatology 2%
- Sun exposure
- Contact dermatitis
- Drug reactions
- Photosensitivity
- Xerosis
- Atopic dermatitis
- Infections
- Seborrheic dermatitis
- Psoriasis
- Blistering diseases
- Pruritus
- Benign skin tumors
- Acne rosacea
- Onychomycosis (tinea unguium)
- Chronic venous insufficiency

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

Gastroenterology 2.5%
- 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 2%
- 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

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

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

**Neurology**
- 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%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geriatric Syndromes</th>
<th>22.5% of Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive impairment</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild cognitive impairment</td>
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<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>
<td></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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other cognitive impairment topics (postoperative cognitive dysfunction)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delirium</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizziness and light-headedness</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vertigo</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-vertigo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Falls (non-syncopal)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incontinence</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pressure ulcers <2%
Sleep disorders <2%
Undernutrition and involuntary weight loss <2%
Obesity and overweight <2%
Frailty <2%
Elder mistreatment <2%
Deconditioning <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%

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

### Ethics
- Ethical principles of care
- Case-based ethical dilemmas

### Decision making
- Advance directives
- Surrogate decision making
- Decision-making capacity

### Caregiver and family concerns
- Caregiver stress and burnout
- Inability to live alone
- Driving
- Management of finances

### Cultural aspects of aging
- 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

July 2023