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>100%</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>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>Disability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determinants of health and longevity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</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

### Diseases in the Elderly 45% of Exam

**Allergy**
  Allergic rhinitis
  Ocular
  Drug allergy
  Other allergy topics

**Cardiovascular** 6%
  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%
  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
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 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 thromboembolism
Pleural diseases
Acute respiratory failure
Occupational and environmental lung diseases
Other pulmonary disease topics

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

Ophthalmology <2%  
Macular degeneration  
Glaucoma  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geriatric Psychiatry</th>
<th>8.5% of Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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>
</table>
| 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 |
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%

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
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
Palliative care 5%
  Pain and other symptom management
  States of reduced consciousness
  Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) outcomes
  Hospice benefit
  Goals of care
  Communication

January 2024