Gastroenterology 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 gastroenterologist 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 gastroenterologist.

Exam content

Exam content is determined by a pre-established blueprint, or table of specifications. The blueprint is developed by ABIM and 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>Esophagus</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomach and Duodenum</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biliary Tract</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pancreas</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Intestine</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colon</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exam questions in the content areas below may also address topics in endoscopy, genetic conditions, medication management and risks, nutritional support, and quality benchmarking.
**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, imaging studies, electrocardiograms, endoscopic 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/gastroenterology/exam-tutorial.aspx](http://www.abim.org/certification/exam-information/gastroenterology/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>Esophagus</th>
<th>11% of Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anatomy, development, and physiology</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatomic abnormalities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esophageal physiology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symptoms and clinical presentation</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysphagia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartburn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest pain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globus sensation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diseases and disorders</strong></td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oropharyngeal disorders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esophageal motility and functional disorders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrett's esophagus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign body and food impaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Esophageal injury
Esophageal infections
Neoplasms of the esophagus
  Benign
  Malignant
Esophageal ulcerations
Eosinophilic esophagitis
Esophageal varices
Systemic disorders involving the esophagus

**Stomach and Duodenum**  15% of Exam

**Anatomy, development, and physiology**  <2%
  Anatomic abnormalities
  Physiology of the stomach and duodenum

**Symptoms and clinical presentation**  3%
  Upper gastrointestinal bleeding
  Dyspepsia and upper abdominal pain
  Nausea and vomiting

**Diseases and disorders**  10.5%
  Gastric mucosal disorders
    Inflammatory
    Infiltrative
  Peptic ulcer disease
    H. pylori
    Medication-induced disease
  Neoplasms of the stomach and duodenum
    Benign
    Malignant
  Gastric motility and functional disorders
  Post-surgical conditions
    Bariatric surgery
    Surgery for benign disease
    Surgery for malignant disease

**Liver**  25% of Exam

**Anatomy, development, and physiology**  2.5%
  Anatomic abnormalities
  Hepatic physiology
**Symptoms and clinical presentation**

- Abnormal liver chemistries
- Jaundice
- Portal hypertension
  - Varices
  - Ascites and hepatic hydrothorax
  - Hepatorenal syndrome
  - Portosystemic encephalopathy
  - Pulmonary complications
- Pruritus

**Diseases and disorders**

- Inherited disorders
  - Iron overload
  - Wilson's disease
  - Alpha-one antitrypsin deficiency
  - Cystic fibrosis
  - Sickle cell hepatopathy
- Cholestatic liver diseases
  - Primary biliary cirrhosis
  - Primary sclerosing cholangitis
  - Secondary biliary cirrhosis
- Viral hepatitis
  - Hepatitis A
  - Hepatitis B
    - Acute hepatitis B
    - Chronic hepatitis B
  - Hepatitis C
    - Acute hepatitis C
    - Chronic hepatitis C
  - Delta hepatitis
  - Hepatitis E
- Autoimmune hepatitis
- Vascular liver disease
- Alcoholic liver disease
- Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease
- Drug-induced liver disease
- Pregnancy-related liver disease
- Acute liver failure
- Neoplasms of the liver
  - Benign
  - Malignant
Liver abscess
Hepatic manifestations of systemic disease
Liver transplantation
  Indications and complications
Surgical considerations for patients who have liver disease
Extrahepatic manifestations in patients who have liver disease

**Biliary Tract**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10% of Exam</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anatomy, development, and physiology</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatomic abnormalities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiology of the biliary tract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symptoms and clinical presentation</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstructive jaundice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right upper quadrant pain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hemobilia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diseases and disorders</strong></td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallstone disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallbladder diseases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bile duct diseases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biliary infections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neoplasms of the biliary tract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malignant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biliary motility and functional disorders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pancreas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11% of Exam</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anatomy, development, and physiology</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatomic abnormalities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiology of the pancreas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symptoms and clinical presentation</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malabsorption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duct disruptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diseases and disorders</strong></td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute pancreatitis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic pancreatitis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neoplasms of the pancreas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malignant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Small Intestine

Anatomy, development, and physiology
- Congenital anomalies
- Acquired structural anomalies
- Digestion, absorption, and malabsorption
- Mechanical obstruction and ileus

Symptoms and clinical presentation
- Diarrhea
- Acute abdominal pain
- Chronic abdominal pain
- Bleeding from small intestinal source
- Abdominal distention, bloating, and gas

Diseases and disorders
- Small bowel motility and functional disorders
- Small bowel infections
- Small bowel injury
- Immunologic and inflammatory disorders of the gut
  - Eosinophilic gastroenteritis
  - Crohn's disease of the small bowel
    - Complications
    - Extra-intestinal manifestations
- Celiac disease
- Neoplasms of the small bowel
  - Benign
  - Malignant
- Vascular disorders of the small bowel

Colon

Anatomy, development, and physiology
- <2%
  - Volvulus and intussusception
  - Defecation

Symptoms and clinical presentation
- <2%
  - Constipation
  - Diarrhea
  - Fecal incontinence
  - Lower gastrointestinal bleeding
  - Abdominal pain
Diseases and disorders

Colorectal motility and functional disorders
Colorectal infections
Colorectal injury
Inflammatory bowel disease
  Microscopic colitis
  Ulcerative colitis
  Crohn's disease
  Drug-induced inflammatory bowel disease
Diverticular disease
  Hemorrhage
  Diverticulitis
Appendicitis
Neoplasms of the colon and rectum
  Benign
  Malignant
Vascular disorders of the colon and rectum
Perianal and anorectal disorders
Post-surgical colorectal conditions

January 2021