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>100%</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.

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>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>
<td></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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic characteristics</td>
<td></td>
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<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
- 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>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**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**

- 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 (jejunum and ileum) disorders
Colon disorders
Gastrointestinal bleeding disorders

Genitourinary and gender-specific disorders 2%
Male genitourinary disorders
Gynecologic disorders

Hematology and oncology 4%
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geriatric Psychiatry</th>
<th>8.5% of Exam</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major depressive disorder</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without psychotic features</td>
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<tr>
<td>With psychotic features</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adjustment disorder</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bipolar disorder</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Psychotic disorders</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Substance use disorders</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other psychiatric disorders</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personality disorders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Somatoform disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serotonin syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neuroleptic malignant syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Suicide</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Geriatric Syndromes

**22.5% of Exam**

**Cognitive impairment**

- Mild cognitive impairment
- Dementia

**Dementia**

- Alzheimer disease
- Dementia with Lewy bodies
- Frontotemporal dementia
- Vascular dementia

**Other types of dementia**

- Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease
- Normal-pressure hydrocephalus
- Dementia of Parkinson disease
- HIV-associated dementia

**Other topics in dementia (clinical features; patient safety)**

- Behavioral disturbances
- Amnestic syndromes
- Other cognitive impairment topics (postoperative cognitive dysfunction)

**Delirium**

- 3%

**Dizziness and light-headedness**

- 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%

### Functional Assessment and Rehabilitation

**3% of Exam**

- Assessment of disability
- Assessment of rehabilitation potential
- Aspects of rehabilitation

**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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preventive medicine</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immunizations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Screening</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lipid abnormalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health behaviors and lifestyle issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary prevention</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospital care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iatrogenic disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other preventive medicine topics (obstructive sleep apnea)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complementary, alternative, and integrative medicine</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic aspects of health care</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health care delivery models</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivery models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community-based long-term care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional long-term care settings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospital Care</td>
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<td>Transition in care</td>
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<tr>
<td>End-of-life models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical principles of care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case-based ethical dilemmas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advance directives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surrogate decision making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision-making capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caregiver and family concerns</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caregiver stress and burnout</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inability to live alone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Driving</td>
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<td>Management of finances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural aspects of aging</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of medical interpreters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues regarding patient preference</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**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 2020