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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<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>
<td></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>
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<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td></td>
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<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>
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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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug allergy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other allergy topics (lymphoma-associated 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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Heart failure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Valvular heart disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cor pulmonale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pericardial diseases</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Orthostatic hypotension</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peripheral arterial disease</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Syncope</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dermatology</strong></td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun exposure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact dermatitis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug reactions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Photosensitivity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Xerosis</td>
<td></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 (jejunum 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

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- 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)
  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)**
- Hearing loss
- Malignant otitis externa
- Tympanic membrane perforation
- Throat and laryngeal disorders (age-related vocal cord atrophy; submandibular mass; laryngopharyngeal reflux)

**Ophthalmology**
- Macular degeneration
- Glaucoma
- Vision loss
- Keratoconjunctivitis sicca

**Geriatric Psychiatry**
- **Major depressive disorder**
  - Without psychotic features
  - With psychotic features
- **Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)**
- **Adjustment disorder**
- **Bipolar disorder**
- **Anxiety**
- **Psychotic disorders**
- **Substance use disorders**
- **Other psychiatric disorders**
  - Personality disorders
  - Somatoform disorders
  - Serotonin syndrome
  - Neuroleptic malignant syndrome
- **Suicide**

**Geriatric Psychiatry**
- **8.5% of Exam**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>3%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major depressive disorder</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Without psychotic features</td>
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<tr>
<td>With psychotic features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<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
6%
- Mild cognitive impairment
- Dementia 6.5%
  - 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
<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%

## 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%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caring for Elderly Patients</th>
<th>16% of Exam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preventive medicine</strong></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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<td>Lipid abnormalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health behaviors and lifestyle issues</td>
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<td>Secondary prevention</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Hospital care</td>
<td></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><strong>Complementary, alternative, and integrative medicine</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic aspects of health care</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health care delivery models</strong></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><strong>Ethics</strong></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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decision making</strong></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><strong>Caregiver and family concerns</strong></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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<td>Driving</td>
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<td>Management of finances</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural aspects of aging</strong></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>
<td></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

July, 2017