



American Board
of Internal Medicine

Ethical Board Preparation Guidelines

ABIM and Board Preparation

- ABIM does not:
 - endorse or authorize any board preparation programs
 - offer a board preparation course
 - routinely review existing board preparation courses
- ABIM relies on the *professionalism* of the internal medicine community to report potentially unethical board preparation programs
 - ABIM will investigate credible reports

Disclosure of Exam Content

- All ABIM candidates and diplomates are reminded that they are bound by the ABIM Pledge of Honesty “not to disclose the content of the examination to others or reproduce any portion of the examination in any manner, including reconstruction through memorization or dictation.”

Disclosure of Exam Content

- Disclosure or any other use of examination content may expose ABIM candidates and diplomates to criminal as well as civil liability, and may also result in sanctions by ABIM. Sanctions may include invalidation of examination results, prohibition from retaking the examination, and suspension or revocation of certification.

Guidance for Ethical Board Review

- Board review courses should present educational material based on the public ABIM examination blueprints (www.abim.org).
 - For example, “According to the ABIM exam blueprint, you can expect multiple questions on essential hypertension”.
- Board review courses can present information about ABIM question format as described in the ABIM exam tutorial (www.abim.org).

Guidance for Ethical Board Review

- ABIM staff, board and test committee members cannot participate as faculty in activities designed or advertised as preparation for any ABIM examinations, or as faculty in broad-based courses that because of curriculum and/or timing would likely be seen as excellent board preparation.

Guidance for Ethical Board Review

- Board reviews cannot refer specifically to ABIM exam content. This constitutes copyright infringement and is cheating.
- Board reviews shall not include statements such as:
 - “ABIM exams typically/always present the following specific question(s) about X .”
 - “when you see a question referring to Y, the correct choice is Z.”
 - “This question about X was on last year’s exam”

Guidance for Ethical Board Review

- Faculty expertise shall be based on content knowledge not on ABIM examination knowledge.
 - Board reviews shall not state, “faculty are specifically chosen for their knowledge of ABIM exams.”

Ethical Board Review: What to Look For

- Affiliation with accredited programs, educational institutions, societies, etc.
- Authors and/or faculty are board-certified and are affiliated with an institution or program.
- Courses and/or materials cite their sources.
- Curriculum includes medical knowledge, formulas, etc. (not just a review of questions/topics).
- Courses are offered by legitimate businesses, with identifiable references, office contacts, etc.

Ethical Board Review: Cause for Caution

- Marketing materials that:
 - claim to have actual exam material
 - describe course/material as sample-questions and not much else
 - do not provide faculty credentials
 - guarantee you will pass the exam
 - are not affiliated with reputable institutions and/or programs

Residency and Board Review

- Identify to trainees and faculty the seriousness of item sharing, cheating, or illicit board review including the possible consequences to their career and program.
- Pre-approve board review curriculum/syllabus.
- Check in on board prep sessions within your program as you would with morning reports and noon conferences.
- Encourage residents to report any requests for board exam content to the ABIM exam integrity tip line at security@abim.org or 1-800-884-2246.