



Hospice and Palliative 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 physician practicing in the broad domain of Hospice and Palliative Medicine. 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 physician practicing hospice and palliative medicine.

Exam content

Exam content is determined by a pre-established blueprint, or table of specifications. The blueprint is developed by the Subspecialty Board on Hospice and Palliative Medicine 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:

Medical Content Category	% of Exam
Approach to Care	9%
Psychosocial and Spiritual Considerations	11%
Impending Death	9%
Grief and Bereavement	5%
Medical Management	45%
Communication and Team Work	6%
Ethical and Legal Decision Making	7%
Prognostication and Natural History of Serious Illness	8%
Total	100%

The blueprint can be expanded for additional detail as shown below. Each primary medical content category is listed again, with the content subsections devoted to this content area. Please note: The percentages below describe content of a *typical* exam and are approximate; actual exam content may vary.

Approach to Care 9% of Exam
Components
Care settings
Hospice Medicare Benefit

Psychosocial and Spiritual Considerations 11% of Exam
Psychosocial Considerations
Spiritual Issues

Impending Death 9% of Exam
Manifestations
Prognostication
Management

Grief and Bereavement 5% of Exam
Anticipatory Grief
Normal Grief and Bereavement Patterns
Complicated Grief and Bereavement Patterns
Loss History
Therapeutic Interventions
Needs of Bereaved Minor Children

Medical Management 45% of Exam
Pain
Other Common Conditions
Urgent Medical Conditions
Additional management strategies
Palliative Sedation
Discontinuation of technological support

Communication and Team Work 6% of Exam
Communication Skills
Family-Centered Approach
Dynamics of Interdisciplinary Care
Physician Leadership

Ethical and Legal Decision Making 7% of Exam
Decision Making
Patient Rights
Ethics of Physician/Patient Relationship
Professionalism
Controversies
Coma

Prognostication and Natural History of Serious Illness 8% of Exam
Cancer
Cardiovascular
Pulmonary Disease
Multi-organ Dysfunction Syndrome
Stroke
Dementia
Frailty
Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
Perinatal and infant death
Renal Failure
Unintentional Injury and Trauma
Pediatric Neurological Conditions

Exam questions in the content areas above may also address clinical topics in medicine that are important to the practice of hospice and palliative medicine.

Exam format

The exam is composed of single-best-answer multiple-choice questions, predominantly describing patient scenarios that occur in practice settings. Clinical information presented may include various media illustrating relevant findings, such as diagnostic imaging studies

Questions pose tasks such as the following:

- making a diagnosis
- determining a treatment or management plan
- ordering diagnostic tests
- recognizing clinical features of a disease
- determining means of prevention, screening, staging, or follow-up

Exam tutorial

A tutorial including examples of ABIM exam question format can be found at <http://www.abim.org/exam/prepare.aspx>.