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:

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

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
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](http://www.abim.org/exam/prepare.aspx).