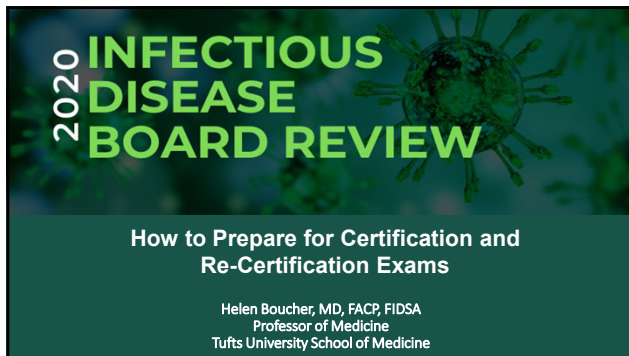


51 – How to Prepare for Certification and Re-Certification Exams

Speaker: Helen Boucher, MD



Website

www.abim.org

<https://www.abim.org/~media/ABIM%20Public/Files/pdf/exam-blueprints/certification/infectious-disease.pdf>

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Exam

- One day computer exam
- All questions: multiple choice, single best answer only
- Initial certification:
 - Four 2-hour sessions: up to 60 questions each = 240
 - Time remaining for each session on computer screen
 - Message box will tell you when 5 minutes left in a session
 - Including registration, optional tutorial (up to 30 minutes), instructions, test, breaks ~ 10 hours
- Maintenance of certification (formerly recertification):
Four 2-hour exam sessions (up to 60 ?s) ~ 10 hours **or** KCI

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Exam

- Can change answers until 60 question section over. Note ones unsure of and review them at end of session
- Roughly 20% of questions don't count = new questions being pretested

5

Exam

- Little less than two minutes per question
- Unanswered questions marked wrong, so guess if don't know
- Read the whole question!
- If question seems ambiguous, or seems to have two correct answers, you might be right. It may be a new question being tested for first time.
Give your best answer and don't fret

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Breaks

- Breaks are optional. Take them!
- 3 breaks during day: total 100 minutes
- 1 break after each of first 3 test sessions
- Can use some or all of break time
- Amount of break time used after each session subtracted from total time
 - For example: if take 10 minute break after session one, amount of break time remaining for exam is 90 minutes
- 100 minutes break time for MOC exam (3 breaks)

7

Exam

- Confirmation email will specify appointment time and give driving directions to test center
- Check out site before exam:
 - Where is it? Where to park? Where to eat?
- Arrive ½ hour early
- Each testing center has 8 - 25 workstations
- An administrator will be present
- At start of exam: see several screens reviewing instructions about taking exam, and asked to agree to a Pledge of Honesty

8

Exam

- You will need personal ID (2 types): government-issued ID with photo and signature (driver's license, passport, etc.)
And
another form of ID with signature or photo (Social Security card, credit card, ATM card, etc.)
- Not allowed to take exam with expired ID
- Palm vein scan, security wand, signature and photograph will be taken

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Exam



- Short orientation then taken to computer workstation
- May request left-handed mouse
- May request instructions adjust height and contrast of computer
- Erasable notepads provided and can type and save notes in pop-up box that accompanies each question
- Can request headphones or earplugs; cannot bring your own
- Any problem: Don't get up! Raise your hand
- Electronic fingerprint each time enter and exit testing room - allow 10 min to check back in

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Disabled Test Takers

- ABIM complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - They will make reasonable modifications to exam procedures as necessary, but there are limits
- Each request individually evaluated
- For more info see Forms of Accommodation on ABIM website

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Not allowed in test room (small storage locker provided)

- Electronic devices: cell phone, PDA, pager, beeper
- Calculator, calipers, camera
- Watch – clock is in testing room
- Wallet, purse
- Briefcase, backpack
- Jacket, coat (sweater OK)
- Books, scratch paper, pens, pencils (noteboards provided)
- Medications require prior approval (contact us feature on website)
- Food and drink
- (Bring drinks for breaks to keep in locker; can bring lunch, but no refrigeration)



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Questions about exam day

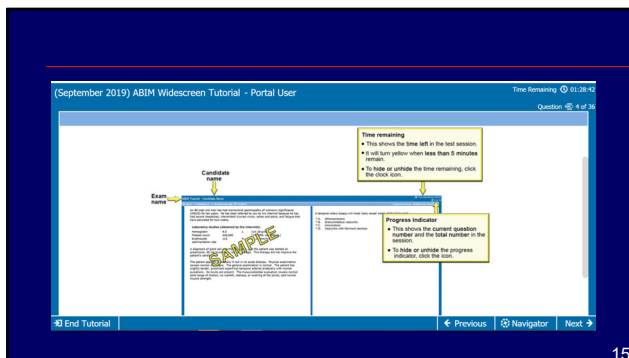
- Call ABIM 1-800-441-ABIM (2246)
Mon-Fri: 8:30AM – 6PM
Saturday: 9AM – 12PM

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Exam Tutorial

- Examples of the exam question formats are available in a tutorial at the ABIM website:
 - <https://www.abim.org/certification/exam-information/infectious-disease/exam-tutorial.aspx>

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Exam Format

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

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- >75% patient case presentations
 - not trying to trick you
- Normal lab values provided
- Pediatric questions not likely
- Very little basic science:
 - mechanisms of resistance - ESBL, KPC
- Very little clinical microbiology (occasional clues):
 - things you could do to help lab
 - e.g. oil on media for lipophilic yeast
 - Iron and 30° incubation for *M. haemophilum*

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Exam Content

- Exam content determined by a pre-established blueprint
 - Different for initial certification and MOC
- Primary medical content categories are

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2019 Exam Blueprint

Medical Content Category	% of Exam
Bacterial Diseases	27%
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection	15%
Antimicrobial Therapy	9%
Viral Diseases	7%
Travel and Tropical Medicine	5%
Fungi	5%
Immunocompromised Host (Non-HIV Infection)	5%
Vaccinations	4%
Infection Prevention and Control	5%
General Internal Medicine, Critical Care, and Surgery	18%
	100%

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Clinical Syndromes

- Pleuropulmonary infections
- Infections of the head and neck
- Infections and other complications in HIV/AIDS
- Cardiovascular infections
- Central nervous system infections
- Gastrointestinal and intra-abdominal infections
- Liver and biliary tract infections
- Skin and soft tissue infections
- Bone and joint infections

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Clinical Syndromes (con't.)

- Infections of prosthetic devices
- Infections related to trauma
- Bloodstream infections and sepsis syndromes
- Nosocomial infections
- Urinary tract infections
- Sexually-transmitted diseases and reproductive tract infections
- Fever (infectious and non-infectious) and hyperthermia

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Patient Populations

- Patients who are neutropenic
- Patients with:
 - Leukemia, Lymphoma, or other malignancies
- Patients following solid organ or bone marrow transplantation/HSCT
- Patients with HIV/AIDS or patients immunocompromised by other disease or medical therapies
- Pregnant women
- Travelers and immigrants

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Exam Content

- More specific details of content can be found on ABIM website.

For example.....

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Bacterial Diseases (27%)*

	Approximate % of total exam
• Gram-positive cocci	4.5%
• Gram-positive rods	<2%
• Gram-negative cocci/bacilli	2%
• Gram-negative rods	2.5%
• Anaerobes	2.5%
• Actinomycetes	<2%
• Mycobacteria	5% etc.

* percentages describe content of typical exam and are approximate

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Bacterial Diseases (27%) more details on website, e.g.

Approximate % of total exam

- Gram-positive rods <2%
Which may include:
Listeria
Corynebacterium
Bacillus
Erysipelothrix

25

Bacterial Diseases (27%) more details on website, e.g.

% of total exam

- Syndromes with bacterial pathogens 3%
Which may include:
Head and neck, Respiratory, Gastrointestinal, Ophthalmologic, Genitourinary, Dermatologic (including skin and soft tissue infections), Musculoskeletal, Neurologic, Cardiovascular

26

HIV Infection (15%)

Approximate % of exam

- Epidemiology <2%
- Pathogenesis <2%
- Laboratory testing <2%
- HIV treatment regimens 4.5%
- Opportunistic conditions 5%
- Malignancies <2%
- Immune reconstitution (IRIS) <2%
- Other complications of HIV 2%
- Related issues <2%

27

HIV Infection (15%) more details on website, e.g.

Approximate % of exam

- Other complications of HIV 2%
Which may include:
Thrombocytopenic disorders
Hypercoagulability, Castelman's disease
HIV infection of specific organs
Endocrine manifestations
- Related issues <2%
Which may include:
Substance abuse, Organ transplantation, Primary care, Non-HIV-related complications more common in HIV

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Viral Diseases (7%)

Approximate % of exam

- DNA Viruses 4%
- RNA Viruses 2.5%
- Prions <2%

29

General Medicine, Critical Care and Surgery (18%)

Approximate % of exam

- General Internal Medicine: 7.5%
Malignancies, Hemophagocytic Syndrome, Collagen vascular and autoimmune disorders, Dermatologic disorders, Bites, stings and toxins, Non-infectious central nervous system disease, Drug fever, Ethical and legal decision making.
- Critical Care Medicine: 8%
SIRS and sepsis, Ventilator-assoc. pneumonias, Non-infectious pneumonias (ARDS), Hyperthermia and hypothermia, Near drowning and Scedosporium and Pseudallescheria infection

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Infection Prevention and Control (5%) More details on website, e.g.

- | | <u>Approximate % of exam</u> |
|--|------------------------------|
| • Applied epidemiology and biostatistics
Outbreak investigation,
Healthcare quality improvement,
Informatics | <2% |
| • Prevention of HAIs in special patients
Obstetrics, Spinal cord injury,
Neoplastic diseases, Organ transplant,
Stem cell transplant. | <2% |

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Fungi (5%)

- | | <u>Approximate % of total exam</u> |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • Yeasts, Endemic mycoses, Molds | <2% each |
| • Superficial / subcutaneous mycoses
Mycetoma, Chromoblastomycosis,
Malassezia, Dermatophytes | <2% |
| • Therapy | <2% |
| • Pneumocystis | <2% |
| • Therapy | <2% |
| • Diagnostic testing* | <2% |
| • Syndromes | <2% |

*histopathology, culture, nonculture methods

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- Pharm and OPAT 2.5%
- Note:
 <2% of 240 = about 5 questions

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• Note:

I recommend you take a look at the website and review the lists.

.....as an example

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Rickettsia (2.5%)

- R. rickettsii (Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever)
- R. akari (rickettsial pox)
- R. prowazekii (epidemic typhus)
- R. typhi
- Orientia tsutsugamushi (scrub typhus)
- R. conorii
- R. parkeri
- R. africae
- Coxiella burnetii

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Exam

- Takes couple of years for new question to appear on exam and count. So new developments in last 2 years less likely to be on exam and count.
 e.g. new Ebola treatment, COVID-19
- Things that were hot and now not, are unlikely to appear:
 - anthrax
 - monkeypox
- Effort made not to have “look up” questions:
 - e.g. Treatments for uncommon parasitic diseases
 - Malaria - yes
 - Filariasis – no

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Pass rates

First-time Takers- Initial certification

Year	# of Examinees	Pass Rate
2008		86%
2009		93%
2010	359	91%
2011	348	96%
2012	342	95%
2013	364	87%
2014	361	86%
2015	347	94%
2016	348	98%
2017	339	97%
2018	338	98%
2019	362	98%

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Pass rate

- Maintenance of Certification (recert.):
 - Questions were from same pool as initial exam – now different blueprint
 - 2015: 301 took; 89% passed
 - 2016: 467 took; 94% passed
 - 2017: 360 took; 90% passed
 - 2018: 367 took; 93% passed
 - 2019: 296 took; 91% passed

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What to do from now to exam

- Know that this Board Review Course is excellent preparation
- Review questions and images from IDBR website.
- Go to ABIM website (www.abim.org) and:
 - take the tutorial
 - read about Exam Day: What to expect
 - see details about ID exam (blueprints, etc.)

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What to do from now to exam

- From binders/on line presentations for this course, pull out the “handouts” covering your weak areas and make a little “binder” (e.g. parasites, fungi, mimic syndromes)
- Review your “little binder” just before exam

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MOC Knowledge Check-In Exam

- Every 2 years
- Shorter – approximately 3 ½ hours
- Can be taken at home/work or in a Test Center
- “Open Book” with UpToDate®
- Uses the same MOC blueprint
- Faster results

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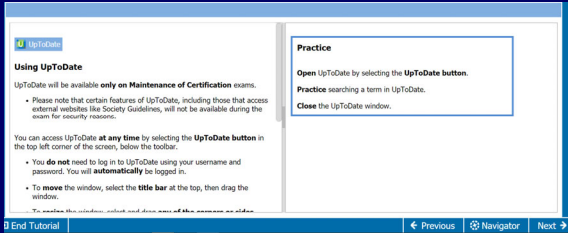
Knowledge Check-In Details

- Two sessions with 45 multiple-choice questions
- 90 minutes/session
- Open-book with UpToDate® access
- Resources:
 - ABIM exam tutorial
 - [UpToDate User Academy for ABIM Exam](#)
 - NB: some features of UpToDate, including those that access external websites like IDSA Guidelines, will not be available

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Using UpToDate

UpToDate will be available **only on Maintenance of Certification** exams.

- Please note that certain features of UpToDate, including those that access external websites like Society Guidelines, will not be available during the exam for security reasons.

You can access UpToDate at **any time** by selecting the **UpToDate** button in the top left corner of the screen, below the toolbar.

- You **do not** need to log in to UpToDate using your username and password. You will **automatically** be logged in.
- To **move** the window, select the **title bar** at the top, then drag the window.

To restore the window, click and drag one of the window's corners.

Practice

Open UpToDate by selecting the UpToDate button.

Practice searching a term in UpToDate.

Close the UpToDate window.

End Tutorial Previous Navigator Next

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Preparation Tips

- Take the exam tutorial
- Practice using UpToDate®
- Review the exam blueprint
- Sign in to your Physician Portal and review your appointment time
- Familiarize yourself with the exam day schedule

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On the Exam Day – Home/Office

- Sign in to your **Physician Portal** and start your exam 30 minutes early
- Make sure you are using the same computer you used to complete the system check
- Prepare your testing space: desk cleared, door closed and webcam/microphone functioning
- Have a valid ID ready
- Use a hardwired internet connection instead of WiFi (better connection)
- Get familiar with the help link

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Last Tips

- Watch the time
 - 2 mins/question seems long but it's tempting to search and search
- Remember that some ?s are experimental – don't get bogged down
- If you clearly pass, you will receive your exam results immediately (this is great)
- If you're close or fail, it takes 3-4 weeks
- NO Stakes this year
- More changes coming!

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Thank You: Bennett Lorber, MD



Good Luck
To You All !

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