

BOARD NEWS

ABFP's 2005 Computer-Based Examinations

The American Board of Family Practice (ABFP) will administer its Certification/Recertification and Sports Medicine Examinations exclusively on computer in 2005. The Certification/Recertification examinations will require 1 day and Sports Medicine will require a half-day. Each will be conveniently offered at more than 200 locations throughout the United States. The number of examination dates has been increased to be conveniently offered on selected Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Expanded availability of dates and locations will help reduce the candidate's loss of income from practice and travel/lodging expenses. The examinations will be offered on July 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, and 30 and August 4, 5, and 6. Additionally, the examinations will be offered on December 2 and 3 with limited eligibility (off-cycle residents, candidates with extraordinary circumstances precluding them from taking the July/August examination, and candidates who are unsuccessful on the July/August examination.)

The conversion from paper and pencil to computer has been approached with the candidate's ease of use in mind. The computer-based test has been designed so that it can be used by those with minimal computer experience and typing skills. Unique tools have been developed that will allow each person to basically duplicate the testing methods they previously used on the written examination. In addition to the electronic tools listed below, candidates will also be provided with an erasable white board and pen to make calculations and/or notes during the examination. Some of the electronic tools include an item navigation toolbar:

- Buttons indicating first, previous, next, and last test items
- Progress in the test displaying the number of answered questions and flagged questions
- A flagging button to tag questions for review later
- A jump button to quickly return to items to review, flag to review, or change an answer
- Ability to enlarge graphics and images by clicking on the image or image button
- A history button that divides the screen into 2 panels for the clinical set problems. The top

panel will contain the patient information. The bottom panel will contain the subset of pertinent items.

There are also special functions and a timer bar to assist the candidate. These include:

- Time left—continually displayed; indicates the time remaining in the examination in the format of hours:minutes:seconds
- Calc—calculator
- Progress—presents the test progress screen, which summarizes the examinee's current progress in the test, which displays number of answered questions and flagged questions
- Help button—presents the Help screen
- Quit button—ends the examination

Format

The computer-administered examination format will use the same format as the written examination. Special testing technologies, such as computer-adaptive testing, will not be used.

Tutorial and Practice Examination

In preparation for the computer-based test, the Board has developed a tutorial and practice examination. These have been developed to provide physicians with an opportunity to acquaint themselves with computer-based testing. The tutorial is a brief introduction to the features of computer-based testing, whereas the practice examination is actually a "sample" examination. The tutorial consists of 3 parts that will allow each candidate to become familiar with examination navigation and screen elements before taking the practice examination. The tutorial and practice examinations are offered solely for the purpose of assisting physicians to become more comfortable with the computer-based testing functions. It is highly recommended that all candidates take the tutorial before beginning the practice examination.

The practice examination provides the candidate with the opportunity to experience the "look and feel" of the computer examination and permits the candidate to navigate and actually answer questions. The practice examination has been designed for a 17" display with a resolution of 1024 × 768. If

the screen is smaller and/or of lower resolution, the practice examination may not appear exactly as presented at the examination site.

The practice examination has 2 sections. Section 1 is a multiple-choice format consisting of 15 items. Section 2 is a clinical set format consisting of 5 patients. An initial time of 30 minutes has been allotted for the practice examination. However, the purpose of the time is to demonstrate to the candidate how to keep track of the time while taking the actual examination. If a candidate takes more than the 30 minutes, a message will appear and the time will reset to 30 minutes. In the actual examination, the test will close and the candidate will not be able to answer any more items.

Mechanics

The practice examination presents many unique tools. For example:

- One may choose whether or not to answer a question by simply moving to the next item. At any time during the examination session, the candidate may go back and answer the item by clicking on its number in the view list.
- Items may be flagged for later review. The test taker can then jump through the list to all the flagged items or can sort the list so that the flagged items appear together at the top.
- At any time during an examination, the candidate may return to an item and change an answer.

- Another feature of the computer-based testing system allows individual options to be deleted from the test-taker's set of potential correct answers.
- Time is kept on the individual computer workstations. The time remaining for the test taker is displayed at the bottom of the screen and is continuously updated. In addition, a message periodically appears on the screen indicating the amount of time remaining.

When and How to Apply

Applications for the 2005 examinations are available online only at <http://www.abfp.org>. No hard-copy applications will be mailed to candidates. Candidates will be required to provide the ABFP with a valid, confirmed e-mail address before beginning the online application. Once all information on the application is completed and approved without deficiencies, candidates will be given the opportunity to choose their testing date and center. Only those test centers with available seats for the test date selected will be shown. There are more than 200 test sites strategically positioned in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Guam from which the candidate may choose.

The tutorial, practice examination, online application, and computer-based test are designed to make the Certification/Recertification and Sports Medicine examinations process more convenient for all physicians. If you have questions regarding the information outlined above, please feel free to call our Help Desk at 877-223-7437.