
Board News From The Executive Director

As mentioned in our inaugural issue, the American Board of Family Practice has, from its inception, been noted for its uniqueness and its "firsts" in the specialty board arena. Certification, recertification, and in-training examinations as developed, constructed, and scored are unparalleled.

The American Board of Family Practice meticulously trains its item writers with special sessions, workshops, and item-testing trial runs. The new writers have their work reviewed by our editors, and within a year or two, most of the item writers have established the proper technique for item writing. Each submitted item (test question) is accompanied by a reference to or a photocopy of the current refereed medical literature that substantiates the correct answer to that item. Each item is carefully edited by our staff for clarity, grammar, construction, and comprehension; then, if the item remains viable, it goes to a committee composed of various experts from the family practice world as well as nationally known physicians from other relevant specialties. If the item survives, it is reexamined editorially and given to what we call a "Relevance Committee." Members of the Relevance Committee are board-certified family physicians who are in full-time family practice and are not part of the academic community. They critique each item for its relevance to the practice of family medicine.

The remaining items go to a final committee who are members of the Board of Directors of the American Board of Family Practice. All the items for the complete examination that have survived the process are reviewed, and this committee may eliminate questions to pare the test down to its actual finished size. At this point, the examination questions are again scrutinized by our editors before going to the printers.

After the examination is scored, we look at any items that did not perform well statistically. These few items (rarely more than 8 or 10) are reexamined for currency—we go to the literature to make sure that the keyed answer for the item is still valid. If the item is questionable as to clarity, validity, comprehension, we eliminate it; if not, the item stands.

In short, the examinations are products of various peers from the academic and practice worlds. We sincerely believe that few examinations anywhere go through such a methodical and fastidious winnowing process; but, as is our wont, we continue to seek improvements in the art and science of testing.

Nicholas J. Pisacano, M.D.
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American Board of Family Practice Certification/Recertification Examination Dates

July 8, 1988

July 14, 1989

July 13, 1990

July 12, 1991

July 10, 1992