Geriatric 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 geriatrician in the broad domain of the discipline. 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 geriatrician. The exam is developed jointly by the ABIM and the American Board of Family Medicine.

Exam content

Exam content is determined by a pre-established blueprint, or table of specifications, which 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>Gerontology</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases in the Elderly</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geriatric Psychiatry</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geriatric Syndromes</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Assessment and Rehabilitation</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for Elderly Patients</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Exam format

The 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

Clinical information presented may include patient photographs, radiographs, electrocardiograms, recordings of heart sounds, video, and other media to illustrate relevant patient findings.

A tutorial including examples of ABIM exam question format can be found at http://www.abim.org/certification/exam-information/tutorials/default.aspx.

The blueprint can be expanded for additional detail as shown below. Each of the medical content categories is listed there, and below each major category are the content subsections and specific topics that may appear in the exam. Please note: actual exam content may vary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gerontology</th>
<th>7% of Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physiology</td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>General principles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Normal physiologic changes with aging</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical implications of age-related changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demography and epidemiology</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race and ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living arrangements and marital status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Determinants of health and longevity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Psychology and sociology of aging
- Stressors and coping strategies
- Social network and social involvement
- Spirituality
- Sexuality
- Successful aging

Interpretation of literature
- Study design
- Biostatistics
- Bias

Medication issues in the elderly not related to specific conditions
- Pharmacokinetics
- Pharmacodynamics
- Mechanism of action of medications
- Adverse drug reactions undifferentiated to specific diagnosis
- Other medication issues in the elderly (drug withdrawal)

### Diseases in the Elderly 45% of Exam

**Allergy**
- Allergic rhinitis
- Ocular
- Drug allergy
- Other allergy topics (lymphoma-associated angiodema; anaphylaxis)

**Cardiovascular** 6%
- Rhythm disturbances
- Heart failure
- Valvular heart disease
- Cor pulmonale
- Pericardial diseases
- Atherosclerosis and coronary artery disease
- Hypertension
- Orthostatic hypotension
- Peripheral arterial disease
- Syncope

**Dermatology** 2%
- Sun exposure
- Contact dermatitis
- Drug reactions
- Photosensitivity
Xerosis
Atopic dermatitis
Infections
Seborrheic dermatitis
Psoriasis
Blistering diseases
Pruritus
Benign skin tumors
Acne rosacea
Onychomycosis (tinea unguium)
Chronic venous insufficiency

Endocrinology 4.5%
Diabetes mellitus
Metabolic syndrome
Adrenal disorders
Thyroid disorders
Osteoporosis
Disorders of calcium metabolism
Vitamin D
Diabetes insipidus

Gastroenterology 2.5%
Esophageal disorders
Stomach and duodenum disorders
Liver disorders
Biliary tract disorders
Pancreas disorders
Small intestine (jejenum and ileum) disorders
Colon disorders
Gastrointestinal bleeding disorders

Genitourinary and gender-specific disorders 2%
Male genitourinary disorders
Gynecologic disorders

Hematology and oncology 4%
Hematology
  Decreased blood cell counts
  Increased blood cell counts
  Coagulation disorders
  Thrombotic disorders
Hematologic malignancies
Solid tumors
Complications of malignancy
Infectious diseases 4%
  Atypical presentations
  Fever of unknown origin
  Respiratory infections
  Genitourinary
  HIV and AIDS
  Intra-abdominal and gastrointestinal
  Neurologic
  Bones and joints
  Miscellaneous infections
    Tetanus
    Botulism
    Lyme disease
    Miscellaneous infections not otherwise mentioned
  Bacteremia and sepsis
    Endocarditis
    Other bacteremia and sepsis topics
      (severe sepsis and organ dysfunction)
  Drug-resistant and emergent infections
    Common antibiotic resistance
    Vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus faecium* (VREF)
    Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)
    *Clostridium difficile*
    Extended-spectrum beta-lactamase-producing organisms

Nephrology 2.5%
  Hyponatremia
  Hypernatremia
  Acute kidney injury
  Chronic kidney disease
  Glomerular disorders
  Renovascular disease
  Tubulointerstitial nephritis
  Acid-base disorders
  Hypokalemia
  Hyperkalemia

Neurology 5%
  Cerebrovascular disease
  Seizures
  Neuromuscular disorders
  Headaches
  Myelopathies
Traumatic brain injury
Spinal cord injury
Dysphagia

**Oral health**
- Dental caries
- Periodontal diseases
- Candidiasis
- Xerostomia
- Salivary glands
- Temporomandibular joint
- Leukoplakia
- Dentures
- Nutritional deficiencies and oral health
- Other oral health topics (alveolar osteitis ["dry socket"])

**Pulmonary disease**
- Asthma and bronchospasm
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Interstitial lung diseases
- Pulmonary hypertension
- Pulmonary thromboembolism
- Pleural diseases
- Acute respiratory distress syndrome
- Acute respiratory failure
- Occupational and environmental lung diseases
- Other pulmonary disease topics (carbon monoxide poisoning)

**Rheumatology and musculoskeletal conditions**
- Osteoarthritis
- Musculoskeletal conditions
  - Bursitis and tendinitis
  - Fibromyalgia
  - Adhesive capsulitis (frozen shoulder syndrome)
  - Acute disk herniation
  - Vertebral compression fracture
  - Hip fracture
  - Lower extremity amputation
  - Lumbar stenosis
  - Cervical stenosis
  - Low back pain
  - Carpal tunnel syndrome
  - Fasciitis
  - Deconditioning
Other musculoskeletal condition topics
(compartment syndrome)
Crystal deposition disease
Arteritis and vasculitis
Rheumatoid arthritis
Systemic lupus erythematosus
Dermatomyositis and polymyositis
Amyloidosis
Paget disease of bone
Systemic sclerosis
Morton neuroma

Ears, nose, and throat (ENT) <2%
Hearing loss
Malignant otitis externa
Tympanic membrane perforation
Throat and laryngeal disorders (age-related vocal cord atrophy; submandibular mass; laryngopharyngeal reflux)

Ophthalmology <2%
Macular degeneration
Glaucoma
Vision loss
Keratoconjunctivitis sicca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geriatric Psychiatry</th>
<th>8.5% of Exam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major depressive disorder</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Without psychotic features</td>
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<tr>
<td>With psychotic features</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia)</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adjustment disorder</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bipolar disorder</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Psychotic disorders</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Substance use disorders</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other psychiatric disorders</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personality disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somatoform disorders</td>
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<td>Factitious disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissociative disorders</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Serotonin syndrome
Neuroleptic malignant syndrome

**Suicide** <2%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geriatric Syndromes</th>
<th>20.5% of Exam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive impairment</strong></td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mild cognitive impairment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alzheimer disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dementia with Lewy bodies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frontotemporal dementia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vascular dementia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other types of dementia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Normal-pressure hydrocephalus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dementia of Parkinson disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other topics in dementia (clinical features; patient safety)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral disturbances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amnestic syndromes</td>
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<td>Other cognitive impairment topics (postoperative cognitive dysfunction)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Delirium</strong></td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dizziness and light-headedness</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vertigo</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-vertigo</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Falls (non-syncopal)</strong></td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Incontinence</strong></td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pressure ulcers</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sleep disorders</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Undernutrition and involuntary weight loss</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Obesity and overweight</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frailty</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elder mistreatment</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deconditioning</strong></td>
<td>&lt;2%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Functional Assessment and Rehabilitation 3% of Exam

- **Assessment of disability**<2%
- **Assessment of rehabilitation potential**<2%
- **Aspects of rehabilitation**<2%
  - Interdisciplinary team
  - Assistive devices
  - Adaptive equipment
  - Therapeutic modalities
  - Orthotics
  - Prosthetics
  - Environmental modifications
- **Rehabilitation settings**<2%

### Caring for Elderly Patients 16% of Exam

- **Preventive medicine** 4%
  - Immunizations
  - Screening
  - Lipid abnormalities
  - Health behaviors and lifestyle issues
  - Secondary prevention
  - Hospital care
  - Iatrogenic disorders
  - Other preventive medicine topics (obstructive sleep apnea)
- **Complementary, alternative, and integrative medicine**<2%
- **Economic aspects of health care**<2%
- **Health care delivery systems** 2%
  - Chronic care model
  - Delivery models
  - Community-based long-term care
  - Institutional long-term care settings
  - Hospital Care
  - Transition in care
  - End-of-life models
- **Ethics**<2%
  - Ethical principles of care
  - Case-based ethical dilemmas
- **Decision making**<2%
  - Advance directives
  - Surrogate decision making
  - Decision-making capacity
Caregiver and family concerns  <2%
  - Caregiver stress and burnout
  - Inability to live alone
  - Driving
  - Management of finances

Cultural aspects of aging  <2%
  - Use of medical interpreters
  - Issues regarding patient preference

Palliative and end-of-life care  5%
  - Pain and other symptom management
  - States of reduced consciousness
  - Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) outcomes
  - Physician aid-in-dying (physician-assisted suicide)
  - Hospice benefit
  - Palliative care models and outcomes
  - Goals of care
  - Communication

January, 2016