



THE AMERICAN BOARD OF ORAL AND MAXILLOFACIAL PATHOLOGY

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Introduction

Instructions and Information to Candidates for the Certifying Examination

This information was prepared by the staff of the American Board of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology in order to provide candidates with a better understanding of the application process and how the examination is conducted. It does not list the prerequisites and requirements necessary to qualify for the examination, the dates for receipt of applications, or the dates and location of the examination. This and related policy information are available in the Board's Bylaws booklet that was sent by the Executive Secretary or will be mailed to candidates following approval of their application to challenge the examination.

Processing of the Application

The processing of an application takes approximately 6 to 8 weeks. The procedure for processing applications includes the following steps:

1. A review of the application is made to determine that all required information is complete, the necessary documents are included, and the \$1,000 fee is enclosed. If the application is not complete, it will be returned to the candidate. An incomplete application will not be processed until a complete application has been received.
2. If the application is complete, a letter will be sent to the candidate acknowledging receipt of the application indicating that the application will be processed.
3. The evaluation form is sent to the candidates most recent or principal training director and reference forms are sent to the other individuals listed in the application as references. In order to prevent any delay in the processing of the application, the candidate is asked to request that those listed in the application as references promptly complete and return the forms.
4. After all the reference forms have been returned to the Board office, the application is reviewed by the Credentials Committee, which determines if the training requirements have been fulfilled. A candidate may not challenge an examination unless declared eligible by the Credentials Committee.
5. The candidate is notified by letter regarding Board eligibility. For those declared Board eligible, the period of time during which the candidate may challenge the examination is five years. When a Board eligible candidate desires to challenge an examination, he or she must declare their intention to do so by submitting an Examination Registration Form.

Information Sent to Candidates

If a candidate is declared eligible and has applied to challenge an examination, the following materials will be forwarded approximately 6 weeks prior to the examination:

1. A schedule of the examination giving dates and times of the various sections of the examination.
2. A reservation form for making hotel reservations that is to be mailed directly to the hotel. Because of time schedules, it is suggested that the candidates stay at the hotel adjacent to the examination site, unless the candidate lives in that city.
3. Behavioral guidelines.

Travel and Hotel Accommodations

All candidates are responsible for their own travel and hotel accommodation arrangements and all their expenses. The Board will ask the hotel to make an adequate number of rooms available for candidates, but does not make individual arrangements. Candidates are responsible for reporting to the examination site at the time stated on the examination schedule form.

It is very difficult to keep the temperature in the examination rooms at a level that is satisfactory to all. Frequently, some find it too warm and others too cool. It is strongly suggested that those persons sensitive to cooler temperatures bring a sweater or jacket to the examination room.

Preparations for the Examination

In preparing for the examination, the candidate should do the following:

1. Become familiar with the formats of the questions used.
2. Bring several #2 pencils with erasers. Other grades of pencils or pens are not acceptable.
3. Nikon Alphaphot 2 microscopes with 10X widefield oculars, 4X, 10X, 40X, 100X oil immersion objectives, mechanical stages, abbe condensers, and built-in light sources are provided in the examination center, but candidates may bring their own if they wish. If so, include an extra bulb. Ancillary microscopic tools (e.g. polarizing lenses) will not be supplied. Candidates should bring any and all ancillary tools that they believe they may need whether or not they bring their own microscope.

Examination Scoring and Candidate Anonymity

The candidate will receive a coded candidate number at the beginning of the examination that will be used to identify each candidate on all four parts of the examination. The Directors will not "break" the code that identifies the individual until after scoring of the examination is complete. The candidate should help ensure their anonymity during the examination by keeping any reference to their candidate number (on examination booklets or microscopic slide boxes) concealed

Description of Examinations

Microscope set up: On the days of the surgical examinations, if the candidate is not using one of the microscopes provided, they should go to the examination site 30 minutes prior to the scheduled examination starting time and set up their microscope. After the microscope has been set up and the candidate is assured of its working order, the candidate may leave the room, but should remain nearby.

SURGICAL:

The surgical pathology portion of the examination is administered in two parts. The first part is administered on the first day of the examination and consists of 35 oral and maxillofacial pathology microscopic cases. The second part is administered on the second day of the examination and consists of 20 additional oral and maxillofacial pathology microscopic cases and 15 general pathology microscopic cases. Each part may include one or two cytologic preparations. Each portion of the surgical examination has a time limit of four hours. For the oral and maxillofacial pathology cases, the candidate will provide microscopic diagnoses. All categories of disease will be covered.

On the diagnosis line, write the most likely diagnosis and be as specific as possible. If special stains or other procedures are necessary to establish a more definitive diagnosis, these should be placed in the comment section along with alternative diagnostic considerations. For example:

Diagnosis: Gingiva: sarcomatoid malignant neoplasm suggestive of spindle cell carcinoma.

Comment: Although the clinical and histologic features are interpreted to be most suggestive of spindle cell carcinoma, the differential diagnosis of this neoplasm includes melanoma and leiomyosarcoma, among others. Immunohistochemical stains for cytokeratin, S100 protein, HMB-45, smooth muscle actin, and desmin could potentially help clarify the nature of this malignant neoplasm.

If the diagnosis does not require further clarification, leave the comment section blank. Everything written will be considered in the scoring process. Inappropriate or inaccurate comments will adversely affect the score. Critical errors (for example, diagnosing a benign lesion as malignant) will also be considered in the overall assessment.

For each of the general pathology cases, the candidate will list the specific organ or tissue and provide the microscopic diagnosis of any pathologic process(es) identified.

WRITTEN:

The written examination consists of 200 multiple-choice questions viewed on a computer monitor and has a time limit of 4 hours. It includes theoretic, interpretive, and statistical aspects of pathology. The candidate controls the amount of time spent on each question, and may return to previously viewed questions at any time.

CLINICAL:

The clinical examination is a single examination and consists of 50 cases. The examination has a time limit of 2 1/2 hours. For each case, one or two images will appear on the candidate's computer monitor, together with a brief clinical history and/or a question. All answers are fill-in-the-blank format, requiring either a single diagnosis or

a brief differential diagnosis to be legibly written in the test booklet. The candidate may view each case for as long as he or she desires and can return to previously viewed cases. The section focuses on the clinical aspects of disease, but may include correlation with immunofluorescence or other clinical laboratory studies.

Question Formats

For the surgical pathology portion of the examination, the question number correlates with the slide (case) number. The candidate is asked to list their diagnosis for each case in the space provided. A small amount of additional space is provided for comments, if the candidate needs to qualify an opinion or indicate the need for special studies.

The written examination uses an objective, multiple-choice question format. The Board has prepared samples of the types of questions currently included in the written and clinical examinations. Candidates will find it helpful to study the instructions accompanying these samples and become familiar with the various formats. Certain questions test the candidate's recognition of the similarity or dissimilarity of pathologic processes. Other questions evaluate the candidate's judgment as to cause and effect, the lack of causal relationships, or the clinical implications.

The candidate's score will be based on the total number of correct answers. In the written and clinical portions of the examination, there is no penalty imposed for incorrect answers. In the surgical portions of the examination, critical errors are assessed an additional penalty.

SAMPLE QUESTION TYPES

Multiple-Choice

Directions: each of the following questions or incomplete statements is followed by three to five suggested answers. Select the one answer that is best in each case.

The oral manifestations of Peutz-Jeghers syndrome include:

- A) multiple papillomas.
- B) gingival hyperplasia.
- C) sebaceous glands in the oral mucosa.
- D) silver pigmentation of the oral mucosa.
- E) multiple pigmented macules.

ANSWER: E.

Completion

This type of question is used on the clinical examination and will ask for a single diagnosis or several differential diagnoses.

The most likely diagnosis for this 2.0 cm palatal mass is:

or

List three differential diagnoses for this 2.0 cm palatal mass.

Source of Questions

All ABOMP Directors submit questions to the Board. Only questions evaluated by the test construction committee and found to be appropriate and unambiguous are accepted as valid test questions. A formula/matrix is used to ensure that all aspects of oral and maxillofacial pathology are tested and no single subject receives undue emphasis.

Conduct of the Examination

1. Assigned seats and name cards: In the examination room, candidates should sit at their assigned seat. The name card at their seat should not be removed. Times listed on the schedule are the actual starting times of the examination. The candidate is expected to be at his/her seat and ready to take the examination at the designated time.

2. Personal items in the examination room: The only personal items permitted in the examination room are #2 pencils, and erasers, and microscopes during the surgical pathology examinations. Specifically excluded are all calculators (a calculator is available on the computer), personal organizers, books, notes, and any other papers. Pagers, cell phones, and other communication devices are not allowed in the examination room.

3. Note taking: No notes of any kind may be made during or between examinations while in the examination room. A candidate may be subject to disciplinary action should this occur. Examination booklets may be used for calculations, etc. All examination booklets must be returned intact at the completion of the examination.

4. Examination booklets and scoring: Each candidate will have an examination booklet for the surgical and clinical examinations, and an examination instruction booklet for the written portion of the exam. The candidate should follow instructions for each specific examination.

5. Computer usage: Before the start of the written and clinical examinations there will be a practice test so that candidates can become familiar with the computer testing process. The items contained in the practice test will not be scored. All questions will be displayed on the computer screen; candidates will enter their answers by pressing one of five computer keys. There will be a help screen, if needed. Computer skills are not needed to take this examination.

6. Microscopic slides: For the surgical pathology examinations, the number of the question will correspond with the number of the appropriate slide. Thus, slide #25 will correspond with question #25 in the examination booklet. The slides should be kept in the original order.

7. Examination conclusion: When the chief examiner announces the end of the examination, all activity in regard to answering questions must cease. No additional questions are to be answered. Any candidate who continues to work on the examination after the announced end of the examination will be disqualified.

8. Smoking and beverages: No smoking is permitted at candidate positions during the examination. No water or other beverages are permitted at candidate positions during the examination. A water fountain will be available just outside the room.

9. Restroom breaks: Only one male and one female candidate at a time are permitted to leave the examination room. While away from the table, the examination booklet should be turned over.

10. Communication between candidates: Communication between candidates during an examination is absolutely prohibited.

11. Questions concerning the exam: Examination proctors will only answer questions about the general conduct of the examination. They will not answer questions about specific questions on the examination. Queries from candidates will be reported by the examiners to the appropriate committee for assessment.

Irregularities

The examination will be supervised by Board Directors to ensure that the examination is properly conducted in accordance with the rules of the Board.

In the interest of protecting the integrity of the ABOMP and its certification examinations, the following irregular behaviors may be sufficient to bar a person from future examinations, to terminate one's participation in the examination, to invalidate the results of one's examination, to cause the withholding or revocation of one's scores or certificate, or to merit other appropriate action by the Board.

1. The giving or receiving of aid in the examination as evidenced by observation.

2. The unauthorized possession, reproduction, or disclosure of any ABOMP examination-related materials, including, but not limited to, examination questions or answers, before, during, or after the examination.

3. The offering of any benefit to any agent of the Board in return for any right, privilege, or benefit which is not usually granted by the Board to other similarly situated candidates or persons.

In addition, the Board may withhold a candidate's scores and require that the candidate retake the examination if presented with sufficient evidence that the security of the examination has been compromised, notwithstanding the absence of any evidence of the candidate's personal involvement in such activities.

At the completion of the surgical examinations, the Proctor will check the box of microscopic slides as to order and number.

Queries During Examinations

In spite of the great care exercised in the proofreading of examinations, typographical errors may occasionally occur. In practically all instances, these are simple spelling or typing errors and the meaning is readily apparent. Out of fairness to all candidates taking the examination, examiners and proctors are instructed not to answer individual questions, make judgments, or interpret a possible error. Candidates should exercise their own judgment. Nonetheless, if a candidate feels that an error exists, the candidate should bring his or her concern to the attention of a Proctor during or immediately following that section of the examination. The Board reviews the examination prior to scoring. If the Board determines that an error is critical to correctly answering a question, that question will be eliminated from the final scoring of the examination.

Retaking the Examination

The fee to retake the examination is also \$1,000. The fee and Examination Registration Form must be postmarked by June 1st.

ABOMP Application for Certification

You can download the Application at:

http://www.abomp.org/pgs/ABOMP-Application_for_Certification.doc.

It is a Microsoft Word document that you can edit, print and send to us.