FAQs AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT CORE EXAM

By Kay H. Vydanreny, MD
Associate Executive Director for Diagnostic Radiology and Subspecialties, American Board of Radiology

ACR Annual Meeting and Chapter Leadership Conference, Resident and Fellow Section
April 2014, Washington, D.C.
How is this exam scored?

• Criterion (not norm) referenced
  – Measures what a candidate does relative to standard vs. how he/she does relative to others
  – Passing score determined by “Angoff committees” who ask “Would just-competent candidate answer this question correctly
  – 100% could theoretically pass exam
• Two stage scoring process
  – Step 1: Must achieve overall score above the Angoff standard for exam as a whole.
    • Yes? Move to step 2
    • No? FAIL
  – Step 2: Must achieve conditioning threshold for each category (all 18). This is higher for Physics than other categories
    • Yes? PASS
    • No? if 5 or fewer categories, CONDITION. If > 5, FAIL
What were the results of 2013 exam?

• PASS - 87%
• FAIL - 11.5% (n=146)
• CONDITION - 1.5% (n=16) - all in Physics

• This is similar to combined results of prior physics, clinical and oral exams
Why didn’t anyone condition any section other than physics?

• Conditioning standard for physics is higher than other categories

• If weak in multiple categories, failed exam
Why do I have to pass all 18 categories?

• Last comprehensive exam taken by candidate
• ABR trustees think it is important that all have knowledge in each category which meets a minimum standard
Who writes these questions?

- Item writer committees in each category
  - Composed of diverse group of ABR certified volunteers, all of whom must be in MOC
  - Academic, private practice, geographical distribution; core committees generally faculty inaccredited residency programs
  - Includes medical physicist on each committee
- Questions vetted, edited by entire committee
- Test Assembly meeting – each question vetted by all attendees. Many discarded because of content.
Why doesn’t the ABR just write a new exam each time?

- Validity and reliability of exams is increased when some exam questions (with good performance statistics) are re-used, and when versions of the exam are “equated” to maintain a constant level for the passing standard
- Thus, must repeat questions form to form and year to year
What can I study for Quality and Safety?

- NIS syllabus on ABR website has been updated to include material on Core exam
Does it matter to the ABR what the candidates think about the process?

• Complaint: no breaks
  – Time added (30 minutes) to each day to accommodate breaks tho few took entire exam period

• Complaint: there was nothing I liked/could eat in the snacks you provided
  – Candidates can bring own snacks. ABR will provide water but not snacks
• Complaint: the hotel breakfasts were way too expensive, room service was way too slow, and internet was way too costly
  – Internet and breakfast now included in price of hotel room at Renaissance
Why can’t I just go to a PearsonVUE center to take this test?

- Modular content difficult for PV
- PV can’t handle case structure on their software
- PV monitors aren’t calibrated, can’t control lighting
- Aim: to have distributed exam. We are working on system to implement
Why didn’t I get better feedback?

• Concentration was on producing valid, reliable exam in a stable environment
• Feedback to candidates in 2014 will be more robust and give results relative to other candidates (ie quartile/category) as well as relative to passing standard