

The ABR supports the thoughtful and conscientious use of sex and gender terms in exam items following the National Board of Examiners (NBME) guidelines.

According to the NBME *Item Writing Guide*:

Characteristics of a patient such as age, sex, gender identity, disability, socioeconomic status, native language, country of origin, and/or occupation are sometimes mentioned in case vignettes in test items. Some patient characteristics (PC) may be important inputs into the diagnostic reasoning process. Others may lead to incorrect conclusions and misdiagnoses. Among the latter are characteristics that could potentially be associated with harmful patient stereotypes.

PC can be described and included in vignettes if they

- are clinically relevant and/or could aid in distractor quality.
- are necessary for the examinee to better understand the context in which the patient is being seen (the item would be unreasonably difficult if excluded).
- add to the overall exam-level representativeness of the referenced patient population.
- increase the probability of detection, diagnosis, or recognition of an otherwise rare condition.
- do not contain negative stereotypes.

Test items should be carefully designed to measure meaningful and plausible testing points (e.g., diagnosis, management, etc.), without the influence of assumptions, bias, or stereotypes. When examinees select the correct (keyed) response, they are given credit because they are demonstrating what the examination item is designed to measure. Health professionals and educators creating assessments should follow guidelines that encourage thoughtful consideration of PC, while at the same time strive to promote diversity and present patients who reflect the population served by your examinees.

Overall, sex and gender terms should be used when necessary and/or helpful in answering the question. Some items may be more worthwhile and/or strengthened by the inclusion of a patient's sex or gender. However, if the patient's sexual or gender identity is not relevant to the answer, it should not be included. Alternate nouns that can be used instead of "man" or "woman" include patient, adult, child, and adolescent. The use of "they/them" pronouns instead of "he/him" or "she/her" are acceptable.

The following are examples of questions that use gender-neutral phrasing:

A breastfeeding patient recently had a thyroidectomy for differentiated thyroid carcinoma. What is the most appropriate recommendation to discontinue breastfeeding before ¹³¹I NaI therapy?

For treatment of an adult with severe respiratory reaction to iodinated contrast material, what is the most appropriate dose and concentration of epinephrine to administer intravenously?

A 23-year-old patient with lymphoma presents for staging. What stage is the lymphoma?

In this pregnant patient, what retroperitoneal finding is shown?

A 6-year-old child presents with abdominal distention. What is the most likely diagnosis?

A radiologist frequently misses pneumothorax diagnoses on chest radiographs because they insist on reading radiographs on their smartphone despite repeatedly being told not to do so. In a Just Culture model, what is the most appropriate next step?