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How to Prepare for Certification Exams and Longitudinal Knowledge Assessment

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CENTER FOR INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT
OF ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE



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Disclosures

- Editor
 - ID Clinics of North America
 - Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy
 - Sanford Guide

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Website

www.abim.org

<https://www.abim.org/~media/ABIM%20Public/Files/pdf/exam-blueprints/certification/infectious-disease.pdf>

<https://www.abim.org/Media/ut0j30zs/infectious-disease.pdf>

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Infectious Diseases Certification

- Initial Certification Exam
- Maintenance of Certification Options:
 - Every 10 year MOC exam
 - Offered 1x/year – Oct 15, 2026, Oct 26, 2027
 - Longitudinal Knowledge Assessment (LKA)
 - Began 2023

<https://www.abim.org/maintenance-of-certification/assessment-information/infectious-disease>

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OL1 How to Prepare for the Certification and Recertification, Including the LKA

Speaker: Helen Boucher, MD, FACP, FIDSA, (Hon) FRCPI

Certification Exams

- One day computer exam
- All questions: multiple choice, single best answer only
- **Initial Certification:**
 - Four 2-hour sessions: up to 60 questions each = 240
 - Time remaining for each session on computer screen
 - Message box will tell you when 5 minutes left in a session
 - Including registration, optional tutorial (up to 30 minutes), instructions, test, breaks ~ 10 hours
- **Maintenance of Certification (formerly recertification):** Four 2-hour exam sessions, up to 220 questions, ~ 10 hours
 - **Open book: Up to Date allowed**

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New(ish) Option: Longitudinal Knowledge Assessment (LKA)



- 5 year recertification period - rolling
- 30 questions emailed every 3 months
 - Don't need to answer all at one time; can spread out over the quarter
- Five minutes to answer online
 - Open book
 - Correct answer and rationale provided
- Must answer 100 Q's per year (out of 120)
- Earn 0.2 MOC credits/correct answer
- After 5 years and at least 500 questions answered, ABIM provides pass/fail notification
- 500 correct answers fulfills required 100 MOC points
- **Currently 2,486 ID physicians enrolled**

<https://www.abim.org/lka/>

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Longitudinal Knowledge Assessment (LKA®) Quarterly Question Schedule (with deadlines)

QUARTER	OPENS	CLOSES
1	Jan. 1	Mar. 31
2	Apr. 1	June 30
3	Jul. 1	Sep. 30
4	Oct. 1	Dec. 31

If you are planning to participate in the LKA, it is a good idea to start early so you don't miss any questions. Questions expire at the end of each quarter and you can't go back to answer them later. Any unopened questions will count against the 100 you can choose not to open over 5 years

<https://www.abim.org/maintenance-of-certification/assessment-information/infectious-disease>

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<https://www.abim.org/maintenance-of-certification/assessment-information/assessment-options/longitudinal-knowledge-assessment/>

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Exam

- Can change answer until 60 question section over. Note ones unsure of and review them at end of session
- Roughly 20% of questions don't count = new questions being pretested

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Exam

- Little less than two minutes per question
- Unanswered questions are marked wrong, so guess if you don't know
- Read the whole question!
- If question seems ambiguous, or seems to have two correct answers, you might be right. It may be a new question being tested for first time
Give your best answer and don't fret

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Breaks

- Breaks are optional. Take them!
- 3 breaks during day: total 100 minutes
- 1 break after each of first 3 test sessions
- Can use some or all of break time
- Amount of break time used after each session subtracted from total time
 - For example: if take 10 minute break after session one, amount of break time remaining for exam is 90 minutes

Note: Proctors monitor entire space (test room, locker rooms, reception)

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Exam

- Confirmation email will specify appointment time and give driving directions to test center
- Check out site before exam:
 - Where is it? Where to park? Where to eat?
- Arrive ½ hour early
- Each testing center has 8 -25 workstations
- An administrator will be present
- At start of exam: see several screens reviewing instructions about taking exam, and asked to agree to a Pledge of Honesty

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Exam

- You will need personal ID (2 types):
government-issued ID with photo and signature
(driver's license, passport, etc.)
And
another form of ID with signature or photo
(Social Security card, credit card, ATM card, etc.)
- Not allowed to take exam with expired ID
- Palm vein scan, security wand, signature and photograph will be taken

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Exam



- Short orientation then taken to computer workstation
- May request left-handed mouse
- May request instructions adjust height and contrast of computer
- Erasable notepads provided and can type and save notes in pop-up box that accompanies each question
- Can request headphones or earplugs; cannot bring your own
- Any problem: Don't get up! Raise your hand
- Electronic fingerprint each time enter and exit testing room - allow 10 min to check back in

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Disabled Test Takers

- ABIM complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - They will make reasonable modifications to exam procedures as necessary, but there are limits
- Each request individually evaluated
- For more info see Forms of Accommodation on ABIM website

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Not allowed in test room (small storage locker provided)

- Electronic devices: cell phone, PDA, pager, beeper
- Calculator, calipers, camera
- Watch – clock is in testing room
- Wallet, purse
- Briefcase, backpack
- Jacket, coat (sweater OK)
- Books, scratch paper, pens, pencils (noteboards provided)
- Medications require prior approval
 - “Contact us” feature on website
- Food and drink
 - Bring drinks for breaks to keep in locker; can bring lunch, but no refrigeration



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Questions about exam day

- Email: <https://www.abim.org/contact.aspx>
- Call ABIM 1-800-441-ABIM (2246)
Mon-Fri: 8:30AM – 6PM

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Exam Tutorial

- Examples of the exam question formats are available in a tutorial at the ABIM website:
 - <https://www.abim.org/certification/exam-information/infectious-disease/exam-tutorial.aspx>

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Exam Format

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

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- >75% patient case presentations
 - not trying to trick you
- Normal lab values provided
- Pediatric questions not likely
- Very little basic science:
 - Mechanisms of resistance - ESBL, KPC
- Very little clinical microbiology (occasional clues):
 - Things you could do to help lab
 - e.g. oil on media for lipophilic yeast
 - Iron and 30° incubation for *M. haemophilum*

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Exam Content

- Exam content determined by a pre-established blueprint
 - Different for initial certification and MOC
- Primary medical content categories are

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2026 ID Exam Blueprint

Medical Content Category	% of Exam
Bacterial Diseases	27%
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection	15%
Antimicrobial Therapy	9%
Viral Diseases	7%
Travel and Tropical Medicine	5%
Fungi	5%
Immunocompromised Host (Non-HIV Infection)	5%
Vaccinations	4%
Infection Prevention and Control	5%
General Internal Medicine, Critical Care, and Surgery	18%
	100%

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Clinical Syndromes

- Pleuropulmonary infections
- Infections of the head and neck
- Infections and other complications in HIV/AIDS
- Cardiovascular infections
- Central nervous system infections
- Gastrointestinal and intra-abdominal infections
- Liver and biliary tract infections
- Skin and soft tissue infections
- Bone and joint infections

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Clinical Syndromes (con't.)

- Infections of prosthetic devices
- Infections related to trauma
- Bloodstream infections and sepsis syndromes
- Nosocomial infections
- Urinary tract infections
- Sexually-transmitted diseases and reproductive tract infections
- Fever (infectious and non-infectious) and hyperthermia

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Patient Populations

- Patients who are neutropenic
- Patients with:
 - Leukemia, Lymphoma, or other malignancies
- Patients following solid organ or bone marrow transplantation/HSCT
- Patients with HIV/AIDS or patients immunocompromised by other disease or medical therapies
- Pregnant women
- Travelers and immigrants

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• Note:

I recommend you take a look at the website and review the lists.

.....as an example

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Rickettsia (2.5%)

- R. rickettsii (Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever)
- R. akari (rickettsial pox)
- R. prowazekii (epidemic typhus)
- R. typhi
- Orientia tsutsugamushi (scrub typhus)
- R. conorii
- R. parkeri
- R. africae
- Coxiella burnetii

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Exam

- Takes couple of years for new question to appear on exam and count. So, new developments in last 2 years less likely to be on exam and count
 - e.g. H5N1 Bird Flu
- Things that were hot and now not, are unlikely to appear:
 - Anthrax
- Effort made not to have “look up” questions:
 - e.g. Treatments for uncommon parasitic diseases
 - Malaria - yes
 - Filariasis – no

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Pass rates 1st-time Takers-Initial certification

Year	# of Examinees	Pass Rate
2011	348	96%
2012	342	95%
2013	364	87%
2014	361	86%
2015	347	94%
2016	348	98%
2017	339	97%
2018	338	98%
2019	362	98%
2020	364	94%
2021	372	92%
2022	379	94%
2023	407	96%
2024	409	96%
2025	390	93%

<https://www.abim.org/Media/yeqjumdc/certification-pass-rates.pdf>

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How is MOC Content Different?

Detailed content outline for the Infectious Disease MOC exam and Knowledge Check-In

● - High Importance: At least 70% of exam questions will address topics and tasks with this designation.
● - Medium Importance: No more than 30% of exam questions will address topics and tasks with this designation.
● - Low Importance: No exam questions will address topics and tasks with this designation.
 LF - Low Frequency: No more than 15% of exam questions will address topics with this designation, regardless of task or importance.

BACTERIAL DISEASES (27% of exam)	Diagnosis	Testing	Treatment/ Care Decisions	Risk Assessment/ Prognosis/ Epidemiology	Pathophysiology/ Basic Science
GRAM-POSITIVE COCCI					
Staphylococcus aureus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Streptococcus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enterococcus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GRAM-POSITIVE RODS					
Listeria	LF ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corynebacterium	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Bacillus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

<https://www.abim.org/Media/ut0j30zs/infectious-disease.pdf>

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Infectious Diseases MOC Pass rate

Year	#Examinees	Pass Rate (%)
2015	301	89%
2016	467	94%
2017	350	90%
2018	367	93%
2019	296	91%
2020	216	89%
2021	265	93%
2022	328	95%
2023	263	92%

<https://www.abim.org/Media/cqyhgyeo/maintenance-of-certification-pass-rates.pdf>

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What to do from now to exam

- Start Early!
 - Make notes of items to review just before the exam
- Know that this Board Review Course is excellent preparation
- Review questions and images from IDBR website to identify areas needing further study
- Go to ABIM website (www.abim.org) and:
 - Take the tutorial
 - Read about Exam Day: What to expect
 - See details about ID exam (blueprints, etc.)

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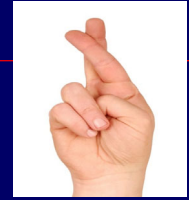
What to do from now to exam

- From binders/on line presentations for this course, pull out the “handouts” covering your weak areas and make a little “binder” (e.g. parasites, fungi, mimic syndromes)
- Review your “little binder” just before exam

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Thank You: Jack Bennett &
Bennett Lorber



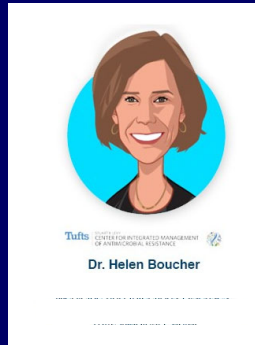
Good Luck
To You All !

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Questions, Comments?

- Helen.boucher@tuftsmedicine.org



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