



NBPME Reports



The National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners Newsletter The American Podiatric Medical Licensing Examination Series

NBPME Responds to Covid Disruptions

Written Test Actions

Early in the pandemic crisis, there was considerable risk that the planned testing schedule could be threatened. In the coming months, this would affect the May Part II, June Part III and July Part I sessions. The National Board recognized the widespread repercussions and organized a series of bi-weekly conference calls beginning April 2.

Participants from AACPM, APMSA, COTH, APMA, FPMB, CPME and ASPE were invited to join board officers and Prometric representatives for regular briefings on the status of shutdowns and planned re-openings of Prometric test centers. Approximately 30 persons joined each call. The discussions topics included potential changes to the testing calendar and the ramification of various alternatives. Full consideration was given to all concerns expressed.

Facing extensive uncertainty, and the possibility of that Prometric test centers would not be allowed to reopen at full capacity, the National Board approved adjustments to the test calendar. The May Part II and the June Part III tests would be authorized over periods of three days each. Because of the higher numbers and greater concentrations of candidates for the July Part I, the board authorized testing to be conducted over a period of two weeks.

The Prometric report on the June 4 call described considerable success. All candidates were tested in the May Part II and their scores were reported timely. The June Part III concluded June 6, after a storm and other problems affected four candidates. A total of 272 candidates were tested over the four days. NBPME president, Dr. Alyssa Stephenson, gave high praise to Prometric staff for their unflagging efforts to schedule candidates with the greatest possible accommodations to each one's unique circumstances and limitations. "We consistently saw the staff working long hours and making incredible efforts to contact candidates and resolve problems. Prometric staff have given the NBPME remarkable service throughout this unusual time," she said.

Prometric has also reported significant progress in planning the July Part I test. As of June 5, 559 of 593 eligible candidates have been scheduled and Prometric expects to have all candidates scheduled at a facility appropriate to each candidate's needs when registration is completed.

CSPE Test Actions

The pandemic has also required planning and adjustments for the Clinical Skills Patient Encounter examination. The board's CSPE committee and the board as a whole have frequently consulted the National Board of Osteopathic Medical Examiners (NBOME) who develop and conduct the patient encounter examination.

The board officers and Dr. Vivian Rodes, chair of the CSPE committee, recently discussed NBOME's plan to delay the start of their own testing until September 1 in a call with NBOME staff. At this point, the board believes it is safe and prudent to continue to plan starting the CSPE exam August 18th.

NBOME has described significant steps to enhance the safety of the test for all participants. These include changes to the building HVAC system, a dramatically increased cleaning regimen using a quaternary germicide, and various social distancing measures. In addition, all NBOME exam staff, standardized patients and candidates will be screened for temperature and recent health history before admission every day. The conclusion of the CSPE committee is that the overall result of these modifications is to provide an environment that is actually safer than what candidates face in clinical rotations. Specific precautions and instructions include the following.

Candidate Communication Onsite Instruction

- There will be no cases related to COVID-19; Do not consider COVID-19 when evaluating your patients
- Do not reference COVID-19 when writing patient notes
- The physician examiners have been made aware of these instructions and will not consider COVID-19 when grading the notes.
- Masks will be worn by everyone; however, the SPs will behave as if there has been no pandemic/shut down/quarantine, etc.
- When participating in the encounters, avoid discussing or asking about such things as social distancing, quarantine, shelter in place or the pandemic.

Exam Modifications and Precautions

- All candidates, SPs, exam staff to wear masks
- Candidates asked to wear gloves for physical exams
- Exam room floors marked for 6 ft. from patient
- Candidates divided across multiple areas during breaks
- Orientation slides edited to include exam modifications

This was discussed with the stakeholders on the Contingency Plan call, June 4. Dr. Stephenson emphasized that the situation is fluid and the board will be having further discussions with NBOME in early July. Contingency plans are being developed if further adjustments are required.



Stuart J. Wertheimer, DPM, FACFAS

The National Board expresses its regret at the passing of a respected former board member.

Dr. Wertheimer graduated from the Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine in 1976. He went on to start his residency in Detroit, Michigan. After his second year of residency he became the Residency Program Director at Harrison Community Hospital (St. John Hospital and Medical Center).

He was very active in the profession serving on the NBPME board from 1996-2005 and serving as President from 2001-2002. Dr. Wertheimer also served on the ABFAS (American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery) board from 2005-2011, acting as President from 2010-2011.

Dr. Wertheimer was elected to the Council of Podiatric Medical Examiners (CPME) in 1997. He served until 2006 and was Chair from 2003 to 2005. He was also a podiatric surgical residency evaluator from 1994-2018. He also chaired the Joint Committee on the Recognition of Specialty Boards.

He was a board member of COTH (Council of Teaching Hospitals) from 1996-1997. Dr. Wertheimer was also instrumental in the birth of ASPS (American Society of Podiatric Surgeons) as he was the Chair of the Steering Committee and a Founding Member. He was a fellow of ACFAS (American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons) from 1982 to 2020.

Board president, Dr. Alyssa Stephenson, a former resident under Dr. Wertheimer, described his approach to the profession. "He was always there for his residents to discuss cases and procedures and give advice even after they left his residency program. Dr. Wertheimer has been an instrumental part of so many podiatrists' careers and successes. Stu was a mentor, clinician, colleague and friend to hundreds of students, residents, and patients all over the country. His happiest days professionally were spent in the operating room performing surgery and teaching residents. He leaves behind a legacy of well-trained foot and ankle surgeons with a passion to help people and serve the profession. He always pushed those he trained to be competent and work to the highest of their abilities and training."

2021 Exam Dates

	Exam Date	Online Registration Available	Registration Deadline
Part I	July 1, 2021	December 15, 2020	June 18, 2021
	October 4, 2021	August 2, 2021	September 17, 2021
Part II	January 5, 2021	August 3, 2020	December 18, 2020
	February 17, 2021	January 25, 2021	February 10, 2021
	May 5, 2021	March 8, 2021	April 23, 2021
**Part III	June 2, 2021	January 4, 2021	May 21, 2021
	December 1, 2021	July 1, 2021	November 12, 2021

Board Approves New CSPE Case Authoring Module

The NBPME, at its March meeting, approved a proposal from NBOME to develop a Podiatric Case Authoring Learning Module. NBOME had developed a case development instruction module for the osteopathic exam and suggested it would be helpful to prepare one specific to podiatry to give case developers an online module with tips and a video to help guide them through the process. The osteopathic case writers found it made their experience easier and they also expressed more confidence in developing cases; NBOME also stated that they are getting some more robust cases since the video was developed. The board approved a proposal to develop a similar video which will be used for CSPE case authors and will also be provided to the schools who are developing cases for their students and to assist with their learning and assessments. The module is expected to be completed within one year.

EXPERT PANEL MEMBERS NEEDED

The National Board is continually seeking new volunteers to serve at test development and review workshops. Participants are provided travel, per diem, an honorarium and continuing education contact hours. Workshops are held in Arlington, VA, Conshohocken, PA or by telephone and web conference calls that are typically three-hour calls from 2:00 to 5:00 Eastern Time. Eligible persons will have completed a residency program and all three parts of the APMLE series. Please submit a CV with email contact information to nbpmeofc@aol.com.

Item Development and Scoring for the APMLE Described

The questions presented to candidates in the American Podiatric Medical Licensing Examination (APMLE) series go through a rigorous review process before they are used in a test and counted for scoring.

Prometric is the test development and administration contractor used by NBPME. All draft questions are submitted to Prometric using a specialized secure item writing system. They are first reviewed by a test development editor to ensure that the question is in the appropriate format—four question multiple choice—and that grammar and syntax are correct. Each question must be tied to an acceptable reference, such as an approved textbook. Finally, each question must be assigned to a specific line item in the test specifications. Draft items for the Part I, Basic Sciences, and Part II, Clinical Sciences, are written by faculty at the podiatric medical schools. Practitioners recruited by the NBPME are responsible for drafting questions for Part III.

No draft item is used in an examination for any part until it has first been reviewed and scrutinized by a panel of subject matter experts. The panel looks at the item to evaluate whether it is correctly classified in the test specifications, is relevant to current practice, that it has only one correct response and three plausible, but incorrect, alternatives, and that it is testing an important concept, not trivia. Questions for Parts I and II are reviewed by panels of both faculty and practitioners in a telephone conference. Questions for Part III are reviewed in person by separate panels of practitioners. Once a question has been reviewed and possibly revised, it is labeled as pre-test and will be inserted in a future examination.

Following each test administration, Prometric test development specialists review every item to see if it met expected standards of performance. That is, was the question neither too difficult nor too easy? Secondly, was it an item that good performers on the test generally answered correctly and that poor performers did not? Any item that does not meet strict statistical limits is submitted to a panel of faculty and practitioners for Parts I and II, or only practitioners for Part III. This panel's task is to analyze why the item statistics are inappropriate and decide whether it should be used in scoring as is, or in a revised form. For pre-test items, the determination is whether it can be used in actual scoring in a future test, or be returned for editing by another panel. No item is used in scoring if the reviewers determine that it is unfair or inappropriate.

Complete test specifications can be found at <https://www.apmle.com/tools-downloads/bulletins-registration/>