

ABD CERTIFICATION PATHWAY CORE EXAM STUDY GUIDE

The CORE modules build upon the knowledge and abilities tested in the BASIC exam. Some material in the BASIC content outline may also be covered in the CORE modules.

Presented herein are examples of the types of content that may appear in the CORE modules. These lists are intended to be helpful as a study guide; however, they are not intended to be exhaustive or all-inclusive. There may be subjects covered in the exams that are not included in the study guide. Conversely, not every subject in the study guide may appear on a given exam.

Diagnoses covered in the CORE exams include both common and uncommon conditions, with an emphasis on conditions that are clinically of higher importance to recognize and manage. The range of diagnoses corresponds roughly to that covered in standard textbooks.

Although the content is separated into distinct clinical areas of medicine, pediatrics, pathology, and surgery, there is necessarily some overlap. There may be questions requiring the integration of knowledge from two or more of these areas. Also, the absence of a subject from a specific clinical section of the guide should not be taken to imply that the subject is irrelevant to that clinical field. For example, the ability to interpret statistical tests appears in the Medical Dermatology section; however, it is equally relevant to the three other clinical fields.

Finally, exam content may change as the field of dermatology changes. This and any study guide or content outline should be considered working drafts that may periodically be updated.



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CORE Medical Dermatology

Examples of Content

- Identify the most likely diagnosis from a digital image or written description of skin lesions.
- Identify the most likely diagnosis by correlating cutaneous findings with history, histopathology, and/or laboratory results.
- Identify the most likely diagnosis based on dermoscopic findings.
- Formulate and prioritize a reasonable differential diagnosis for a given presentation.
- Describe direct and indirect immunofluorescent findings of specific conditions.
- Recognize the range of normal findings in the skin.
- Describe the different types of mucocutaneous findings that may occur in a given condition.
- Identify associated internal / systemic conditions.
- Identify epidemiologic features such as typical age of onset, gender, and geographic associations.
- Describe how the clinical findings change as the disease evolves.
- Given the clinical presentation, select the most likely underlying cause (e.g., medication, infectious organism).
- Describe the natural history of the condition.
- Identify exacerbating and alleviating factors, and factors associated with prognosis.
- Identify the most likely causes of morbidity and mortality.
- Describe consensus diagnostic, classification, and staging criteria.
- Choose an appropriate diagnostic work-up.
- Properly interpret test results.
- Choose an appropriate treatment / management strategy.
- Describe the proper use and monitoring of medications.
- Describe risks and complications associated with therapy, especially common side effects and rare but dangerous side effects.
- Properly manage complications.
- Identify appropriate codes for evaluation and management and medical procedures.
- Describe the fundamental pathophysiology of medical dermatology diseases, including cellular and molecular effectors of disease and cellular and molecular targets.
- Identify the mechanisms of action of drugs used in medical dermatology.
- Describe proper applications and interpretations of statistical tests, and critically evaluate clinical research.
- Describe the fundamental principles of photobiology related to medical dermatology disease pathogenesis, diagnosis, or therapy.



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CORE Pediatric Dermatology

Examples of Content

- Identify the most likely diagnosis from a digital image or written description of skin lesions.
- Identify the most likely diagnosis by correlating cutaneous findings with history, histopathology, and/or laboratory results.
- Identify the most likely diagnosis based on dermoscopic findings.
- Formulate and prioritize a reasonable differential diagnosis for a given presentation.
- Recognize the range of normal findings in the skin from infancy through adolescence.
- Describe the different types of mucocutaneous findings that may occur in a given condition.
- Identify associated internal / systemic conditions most relevant to pediatric presentations of skin disease.
- Identify epidemiologic features such as typical age of onset, gender, and geographic associations.
- Describe the evolution of disease, including which findings may be expected at a given age of the patient.
- Given the clinical presentation, select the most likely underlying cause (e.g., medication, infectious organism).
- Describe the natural history of the condition.
- Identify exacerbating and alleviating factors, and factors associated with prognosis.
- Identify the most likely causes of morbidity and mortality.
- Choose an appropriate diagnostic work-up.
- Interpret test results, including skin scrapings and hair mounts.
- Choose an appropriate treatment / management strategy.
- Describe the proper use and monitoring of medications in infants and children, including weight-based dosing.
- Identify the mechanisms of action of drugs used in pediatric dermatology.
- Describe risks and complications associated with therapy, especially common side effects and rare but dangerous side effects.
- Properly manage complications.
- Describe the fundamental principles of embryology and skin development, with an emphasis on circumstances where errors in development lead to cutaneous anomalies.
- Describe the fundamental principles of the genetic basis of inherited skin disease in those circumstances where knowing the genetic defect and/or affected protein clarifies the pathogenesis, diagnosis, or therapy of the disease.



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CORE Surgical Dermatology

Examples of Content

- Describe the purposes of various types of suture techniques, complex closures, flaps, and grafts.
- Determine the optimal type(s) of closure for a given surgical defect.
- Be able to determine the type of closure used by looking at the completed repair.
- When shown the initial surgical defect and the closure or closure in progress, identify where tissue pre-closure has been moved to effect the repair.
- Identify where to place the key suture(s) in tissue transpositions.
- Describe reasonable expected outcomes of wounds closed with various techniques.
- Identify indications for various types of wound dressings.
- Describe common complications of surgical procedures and measures to prevent them or minimize their probability.
- When shown a surgical complication, be able to determine its probable cause and how it might have been prevented.
- Properly manage common surgical complications.
- Properly manage safety threats such as needle sticks, splashes with bodily fluids, and broken glass, and describe measures to minimize the probability of their occurrence.
- Identify, name, and describe the functions of anatomic structures relevant to surgical dermatology, particularly on the head and neck.
- Be able to distinguish high-risk from lower-risk tumors.
- Diagnose lesions accurately using dermoscopy.
- Choose appropriate diagnostic tests.
- Choose appropriate management options for benign and malignant lesions, to include medical as well as surgical options and observation or no treatment, when appropriate.
- Describe indications, benefits, risks, and efficacy of non-surgical treatments of skin cancers.
- Describe guidelines relevant to surgical dermatology, for example, Mohs micrographic surgery appropriate use criteria and NCCN cancer management guidelines.
- Distinguish cancer from benign findings in Mohs sections.
- Identify indications, risks, benefits, and reasonable expected outcomes for commonly used cosmetic procedures, including soft tissue fillers, sclerotherapy, liposuction, lasers, non-laser light sources, botulinum toxin, dermabrasion, and chemical peels.
- Describe the basics of how common cosmetic procedures are performed.
- Identify common complications of cosmetic procedures and measures to prevent them or minimize their probability.
- Describe the chronology of post-procedural wound healing and its effect on management choices, for example, scar revision.
- Choose appropriate codes for procedures and for evaluation and management.
- Describe the fundamental principles of the science underlying surgical dermatology, to include carcinogenesis, wound healing, laser physics, photoaging, and mechanisms of action of medications used in surgical dermatology.



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CORE Dermatopathology

Examples of Content

- Make an accurate diagnosis based on visual examination of histologic sections, to include specimens prepared using H&E, special stains, immunoperoxidase, and immunofluorescence.
- Describe in words the histologic findings and make an accurate diagnosis based on a written description of histology.
- Identify the clinical correlate of the histologic findings: e.g., how the lesions appear grossly, how the condition presents.
- Be able to make an accurate diagnosis through correlation of the histologic and the clinical findings.
- Recognize which special histologic studies (e.g., stains, immunopathology) may be helpful in diagnosis.
- Distinguish similar conditions based on histology and/or staining patterns.
- Recognize normal anatomy, including anatomy associated with specific regions of the body.
- Formulate a differential diagnosis for characteristic histologic findings, for example, acantholysis, eosinophilic spongiosis, necrobiosis.
- Describe how histologic findings change during the clinical evolution of the condition.
- Be able to make accurate diagnoses when examining immunofluorescent biopsies, KOH preps, hair mounts, and oil preps.
- Describe the technological basis and practical applications of molecular tests used for dermatopathology diagnosis.
- Identify the cellular and molecular basis of pathognomonic histologic findings, for example, colloid bodies.