

REPORTS OF INTEREST TO THORACIC SURGEONS

THE AMERICAN BOARD OF THORACIC SURGERY REPORT TO THE JOURNAL OF THORACIC AND CARDIOVASCULAR SURGERY

The written examination of the American Board of Thoracic Surgery was held on February 19, 1995, in Atlanta, Georgia. A total of 178 individuals took the examination, including 153 first-time takers. The failure rate overall was 11.2% and for first-time takers it was 9.1%.

The 1995 written examination was the second criterion-referenced examination administered by the Board. The philosophy of criterion-referenced testing is based on the concept that candidates should be measured against a standard of knowledge predetermined by the Board rather than against each other, as is the case in a norm-referenced examination. The site for the written examination was moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1995 after having been Dallas, Texas, for many years. The date for the 1996 written examination is February 11, 1996.

The oral examination was held on June 2 and 3, 1995, in Chicago, Illinois. A total of 185 individuals took the examination, including 159 first-time takers. The failure rate overall was 14.1% and for first-time takers it was 13.8%. The 1996 oral examination will be held on June 7 and 8 in Chicago.

Booklet of information and application summary sheets for operative cases

The *1995 Booklet of Information* reflects extensive revisions, including a change in the operative experience criteria. The summary sheet for operative case reporting has been revised and is identical to the operative case reporting form of the Residency Review Committee for Thoracic Surgery. The revised form will be used for the first time by candidates applying in 1996. However, preview copies were sent to program directors in January 1995.

In-training examination

All U.S. and eight Canadian programs, for a total of 384 individuals, participated in the 1995

In-Training Examination, which was administered on April 1, 1995. The in-training examination consists of 80 general thoracic and 80 cardiac questions distributed among the various areas of the specialty in a manner similar to the certifying examination.

Recertification

Diplomates with time-limited certificates may apply for recertification as early as three years before the expiration date of their ten-year certificate. Recertification activity is shown in Table I. In 1994, 48 diplomates recertified for the second time. These individuals were originally certified in 1976.

The Board emphasizes the importance of recertification in communications to diplomates whose certificates are due to expire and informs them that an expired certificate is no longer valid.

A request was received from the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) to conform to its editorial policy of listing only certified individuals in its directories. This would mean dropping from the directories the names of the thoracic surgeons who have not recertified until they complete the recertification process. However, the Board voted to communicate to the ABMS that it wishes to continue with the current policy of placing "NR" after the ABTS diplomate listing if he or she did not recertify.

Examination consultants

The Examination Consultant Committee, established in 1989, continues to be a vital component in the development of the written examination. The Committee meets in September each year to review questions written by the consultants. At its meeting in 1994, 113 questions were retained for future use in the written examination.

Public education brochure

The public education brochure, *Your Surgeon is Certified by the American Board of Thoracic Surgery*, has been well received, with more than 50,000 copies having been distributed to date.

Table I. ABTS recertification activity through 1994

<i>Date of orig. cert.</i>	<i>Total no. cert.</i>	<i>Total no. recert. first time</i>	<i>% recert.</i>	<i>Total no. recert. second time</i>	<i>% recert.</i>
1975	N/A	55	—	—	—
1976	160	138	86	48	30
1977	146	125	86	—	0
1978	154	137	89	—	0
1979	158	143	91	—	0
1980	110	96	87	—	0
1981	131	119	91	—	0
1982	159	139	87	—	0
1983	136	112	82	—	0
1984	135	117	87	—	0
1985	120	79	66	—	0
1986	147	50	34	—	0

N/A, Not available.

Finances

The Board remains in a stable financial condition and continues to be grateful for the support of the diplomates through their dues contributions. This support allows the Board to fund such important activities as the criterion-referenced examination and the Examination Consultant Committee.

New Board members

At the 1994 Fall Board Meeting, Gordon N. Olinger, MD, was elected to membership on the

Board as a representative from the American College of Surgeons. L. Penfield Faber, MD, retired from the Board in October 1994. Dr. Faber had the distinction of serving as the first examination chairman to sit on the Executive Committee and to serve an extended term on the Board because of this appointment. Gordon F. Murray, MD, has been appointed the new examination chairman.

*Richard J. Cleveland, MD
Secretary/Treasurer, ABTS*