

THE AMERICAN BOARD OF ANESTHESIOLOGY, INC.®
4101 Lake Boone Trail, Suite 510, Raleigh, NC 27607-7506
Phone (919) 881-2570 Fax (919) 881-2575
www.theABA.org

**DEFINING THE FIRST STEP TOWARD
BOARD CERTIFICATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION
IN ANESTHESIOLOGY**

INTRODUCTION:

The American Board of Anesthesiology establishes criteria by which physicians may be certified and maintain their certification as diplomates of the Board. As defined by the ABA, a Board certified anesthesiologist is a physician who:

- Possesses knowledge, judgment, adaptability, clinical skills, technical facility and personal characteristics to carry out the entire scope of anesthesiology practice;
- Is able to communicate effectively with peers, patients, their families and others in the medical community;
- Can serve as an expert in matters related to anesthesiology, deliberate with others, provide advice and defend opinions in all aspects of the specialty of anesthesiology; and
- Is able to function as the leader of the anesthesiology care team.

Because of the nature of anesthesia practice, the ABA diplomate must be able to deal with emergent life-threatening situations independently, promptly and efficiently. The ability to acquire and process information in an independent and timely manner is central to assure individual responsibility for all aspects of anesthesiology care. Adequate physical and sensory faculties, such as eyesight, hearing, speech and coordinated function of the extremities, are essential to the independent performance of the functions of the Board certified anesthesiologist. Freedom from influence of or dependency on chemical substances that impair cognitive, physical, sensory or motor functions also is an essential characteristic of the Board certified anesthesiologist.

The Residency in Clinical Anesthesiology is intended to provide education and experience in the science and practice of medicine related to anesthesiology. During training, the faculty of the residency program instructs and observes the resident to assist in the development of those qualities essential to the ABA diplomate. The faculty is responsible for assuring that graduates of their program:

1. Have sufficient levels of knowledge, skills and clinical judgment to allow them to provide anesthesia care independently, and
2. Possess those personal characteristics essential to the ethical and safe practice of medicine.

The program's Clinical Competence Committee provides documentation of the presence of these characteristics by submitting an evaluation of each resident's performance to the ABA every six months. The ABA requires a satisfactory Certificate of Clinical Competence covering the final six months of Clinical Anesthesia training for all entrants into the ABA examination system.

Committees on Clinical Competence judge residents' knowledge in arriving at their evaluations. The ABA examination system also measures the adequacy of knowledge. The scope of this knowledge is currently defined in the Content Outline of the In-Training Examination.

DEFINING THE FIRST STEP TOWARD BOARD CERTIFICATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION IN ANESTHESIOLOGY (Continued)

The Maintenance of Certification process is intended to provide evidence that these characteristics are still present and that the diplomate has completed a program that includes ongoing self-assessment and lifelong learning, continual assessment of professional standing, periodic self-directed assessments of practice performance and quality improvement, and an examination of cognitive expertise.

The ABA defines a Board certified physician as possessing the attributes, professional skills, knowledge, judgment, and clinical skills for assuming independent responsibility for patient care as defined below.

ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES: The physician who lacks one or more of the following attributes is not considered qualified to practice anesthesiology safely.

1. Demonstrates high standards of ethical and moral behavior.
2. Demonstrates honesty, integrity, reliability, and responsibility.
3. Learns from experience; knows limits.
4. Reacts to stressful situations in an appropriate manner.
5. Has no documented current abuse of alcohol or illegal use of drugs.
6. Has no cognitive, physical, sensory or motor impairment that precludes acquiring and processing information in an independent and timely manner or independent responsibility for any aspect of anesthesia care.
7. Demonstrates respect for the dignity of patients and colleagues, and sensitivity to a diverse patient population.
8. Has no restriction, limitation or revocation of license to practice medicine.

PATIENT CARE:

1. Demonstrates patient care that is compassionate, appropriate and effective for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of health.
2. Respects patient privacy.
3. Demonstrates appropriate concern for patients and a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities.
4. Is an advocate for quality care.
5. Demonstrates use of a sound background in general medicine in the management of problems relevant to the specialty of anesthesiology.
6. Recognizes the adequacy of preoperative preparation of patients for anesthesia and surgery, and recommends appropriate steps when preparation is inadequate.
7. Selects anesthetic and adjuvant drugs and techniques for rational, appropriate, patient-centered and cost-effective anesthetic management.
8. Recognizes and responds appropriately to significant changes in the anesthetic course.
9. Provides appropriate post-anesthetic care.
10. Provides appropriate consultative support for patients who are critically ill.
11. Evaluates, diagnoses, and selects appropriate therapy for acute and chronic pain disorders.

MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE:

1. Possesses an appropriate fund of medical knowledge.
2. Is appropriately self-confident; recognizes gaps in knowledge and expertise.
3. Demonstrates medical knowledge about established and evolving biomedical, clinical, and cognate sciences, as well as the application of this knowledge to patient care.

DEFINING THE FIRST STEP TOWARD BOARD CERTIFICATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION IN ANESTHESIOLOGY (Continued)

PRACTICE-BASED LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT:

1. Demonstrates learning and improvement that involves the investigation and evaluation of care for patients, the appraisal and assimilation of scientific evidence and improvements in patient care.
2. Is committed to practice-based learning and improvement.
3. Possesses business skills important for effective practice management.
4. Is complete, accurate and timely in record keeping.

INTERPERSONAL AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS:

1. Demonstrates effective interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and collaboration with patients, their families and other healthcare professionals.
2. Is adaptable and flexible.
3. Is careful and thorough.

PROFESSIONALISM:

1. Demonstrates a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities.
2. Adheres to ethical principles.
3. Demonstrates sensitivity to a diverse patient population.

SYSTEMS-BASED PRACTICE:

1. Demonstrates an understanding of the healthcare system and the ability to effectively call on system resources to provide optimal patient care.
2. Demonstrates an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger context and system of health care.

CLINICAL SKILLS: The physician must demonstrate the ability to organize and expedite appropriate anesthetic procedures including medical interviewing; physical examination; selection, implementation and application of diagnostic studies; synthesis of clinical information; development of a management plan; technical expertise; and counseling of patient and family. The following contains examples that aid the evaluation of psychomotor performance.

1. General Preparation

- a. Adequacy and speed of preparation.
- b. Indicated vascular cannulations including venous, arterial, central venous and pulmonary arterial catheter insertions.
- c. Appropriate application and use of current technology for efficient and safe anesthesia care and life support of patients. Examples include direct and indirect blood pressure measurements, ventilation and respiratory gas monitoring, assessment of neuromuscular function, electrocardiographic, electroencephalographic and evoked-potential monitoring, and evaluation of laboratory results (chemistries, radiographs, etc.).
- d. Instrument and anesthesia machine testing and operation.
- e. Operating room procedures for oxygen delivery, electrical safety, waste gas evacuation and principles of universal safety precautions.
- f. Proper patient positioning during anesthesia.

DEFINING THE FIRST STEP TOWARD BOARD CERTIFICATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION IN ANESTHESIOLOGY (Continued)

2. General Anesthesia

- a. Airway management: head position, ventilation by mask, appropriate use of oral, nasal, and laryngeal mask airways.
- b. Tracheal intubation: oral and nasal intubation by various techniques, appropriate and adequate tracheal and airway local anesthesia, fiberoptic techniques.
- c. Maintenance of respiration and gas exchange including management of various types of mechanical ventilation.
- d. Support of the circulation during the perioperative period, including the management of all types of shock.
- e. Support of renal function perioperatively.
- f. Management of the patient with increased intracranial pressure.
- g. Appropriate administration of fluids and maintenance of fluid, electrolyte and acid-base balance.
- h. Judicious use of blood products.
- i. Provision of effective analgesia/anesthesia.

3. Regional Anesthesia and Pain (including postoperative) Management

- a. Spinal and epidural analgesia/anesthesia.
- b. IV regional anesthesia.
- c. Nerve blocks for diagnostic, therapeutic and surgical procedures.

4. Special Procedures

- a. Management of cardiopulmonary resuscitation.
- b. Anesthetic management of cardiopulmonary bypass.
- c. One-lung ventilation.
- d. Deliberate hypotension.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: The Board certified physician must possess each of the Essential Attributes necessary for the practice of anesthesiology and demonstrate adequate Professionalism, Medical Knowledge, Interpersonal and Communication Skills, Judgment, and Clinical Skills for assuming independent responsibility for patient care with reasonable accommodation or without it.

