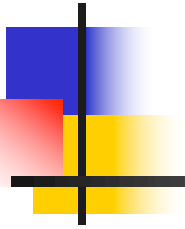


# ABPP Board Certification in Clinical Neuropsychology – What You Should Know (For the Graduate Student)

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# Acknowledgements

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- Armstrong, K., Beebe, D.W., Hilsabeck, R.C., & Kirkwood, M.W. (2008).  
Board Certification in Clinical Neuropsychology: A Guide to Becoming ABPP/ABCN Certified Without Sacrificing Your Sanity. New York: Oxford University Press.
- \* Note: AACN and the authors receive financial compensation from the sale of this book.



# Overview of Presentation

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- 1) The ABC's of ABPP Board Certification
- 2) The benefits of Board Certification in Neuropsychology
- 3) Demystifying the ABPP board certification process
- 4) Advice, strategies, and recommendations to help make ABPP doable for YOU



# The ABC's of ABPP Board Certification

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- **APA** - American Psychological Association (1892)
  - ✓ Primary professional membership and advocacy association for professional psychology
- **ABPP** – American Board of Professional Psychology
  - Created (1947)
  - ✓ Comprised of a unitary governing body and 15 affiliated specialty boards each linked to specific sub-disciplines

# ABPP's 15 Member Specialty Boards



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- Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology
- Clinical Health Psychology
- **Clinical Neuropsychology**
- Clinical Psychology
- Cognitive & Behavioral Psychology
- Counseling Psychology
- Couple & Family Psychology
- Forensic Psychology
- Group Psychology
- Organizational & Business Consulting Psychology
- Police and Public Safety Psychology
- Psychoanalysis in Psychology
- Rehabilitation Psychology
- School Psychology
- Geropsychology

# The ABC's of ABPP Board Certification (cont.)

- **ABCN** – American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology (1981)
  - ✓ The ABPP specialty board responsible for developing and implementing the assessment procedures specific to clinical neuropsychology
- **AACN** – American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (1996)
  - ✓ Membership organization comprised of ABPP/ABCN board certified neuropsychologists
  - ✓ Legally separate from ABCN
  - ✓ Focuses on advocacy and education
- **BRAIN** – Be Ready for ABPP in Neuropsychology
  - ✓ Group of neuropsychologists (500+) whose sole goal is to support neuropsychologists through process of becoming board certified through ABPP/ABCN
  - ✓ Has website, listserv, study groups, outlines, etc.
  - ✓ Affiliated with AACN



# The ABC's of ABPP Board Certification (cont.)

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- **APPCN** – Association of Postdoctoral Programs in Clinical Neuropsychology (1992)
  - ✓ Federation of postdoctoral fellowship programs that share common mission. All APPCN programs are led by an ABPP/ABCN-certified neuropsychologist.

## Other Boards

- **ABN (aka ABPN)** – *American Board of Professional Neuropsychology*
  - ✓ *Separate board not affiliated with ABPP or ABCN*
- **ABPdN** – *American Board of Pediatric Neuropsychology*
  - ✓ *Separate board not affiliated with ABPP or ABCN*



# Benefits of Board Certification in Neuropsychology

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ABPP/ABCN board certification benefits:

- The practitioner
- The public
- The profession

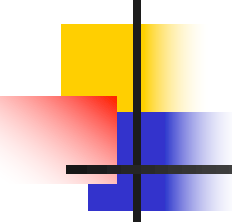




# Potential Benefits to the Practitioner

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1. Credibility in the eyes of colleagues, referral sources, trainees, and patients
  - ✓ Board certification is considered the norm in medical specialties and is also used increasingly in allied health professions, e.g., in pharmacy.
  - ✓ ABPP-CN is the oldest credentialing standard for neuropsychologists, and AACN has the largest number of board certified neuropsychologists (in 2014, 1000+).

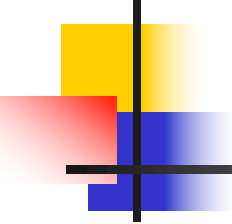


# Potential Benefits to the Practitioner (cont.)

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## 2. Better Pay and Job Security

- ✓ Salary survey data (Sweet, 2006) indicate that ABCN-certified neuropsychologists earn 1/3 more on average and are more satisfied
- ✓ Some institutions specifically link bonuses, promotions, hospital privileges to board certification
- ✓ Some (albeit very few) institutions are beginning to require board certification as a condition of employment
- ✓ Associated with pay differentials in the armed services and pay differential in the VA systems
- ✓ May SAVE you money as well



# Potential Benefits to the Practitioner (cont.)

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3. Simplified credentialing/license and practice mobility
  - ✓ Can streamline licensing process in some states
  - ✓ Can help when joining insurance panels
  
4. Personal and professional development

# Benefits to the Public - One mission of ABPP/ABCN is to protect the public by:



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- Enhancing Quality of Services/Quality assurance through:
  - In most states, term “neuropsychologist” has little legal protection
  - Verifying the competency and expertise of psychologists providing consultation regarding clinical neuropsychology to the public and its institutions
  - Credible self-regulation via meaningful examination and peer review process



# Benefits to the Profession

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1. Establishes clear standards for competence
2. Increased breadth and depth of knowledge base of credentialed practitioners



# Common Questions & Myths Regarding Board Certification

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- 1) “My supervisors and many of the neuropsychologists I work with and respect are not board certified - why should I be?”
  - ✓ Relative to medical field, board certification in psychology is relatively new
  - ✓ ABPP, and particularly ABCN has been growing very rapidly
  - ✓ The number of new certifications in ABCN has either exceeded any other ABPP subspecialty, or been a close second to the clinical psychology subspecialty



# Common Questions & Myths Regarding Board Certification (cont.)

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- 2) I have heard that ABCN is an “old boys network.”
- ✓ ABCN has worked diligently and carefully to help assure a fair evaluation process.
  - ✓ For 50% of the ABPP process your evaluators are “blinded” to any identifying information about the examinees.
  - ✓ Approximately half of ABCN certified neuropsychologists are women.



# Common Questions & Myths Regarding Board Certification (cont.)

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3) ABCN is biased against pediatric/child clinical neuropsychologists.

- ✓ Just under half of ABPP/ABCN certified clinicians work exclusively with children or with both adults and children (Sweet et al., 2006)
- ✓ The written examination covers the ***entire age spectrum*** and includes specialized pediatric knowledge:
  - Many “adult” questions are actually general knowledge questions regarding brain-behavior relationships
  - There are also questions regarding child development
  - The rest of the examination process will focus on your preferred population (adult or pediatric)





# Common Questions & Myths Regarding Board Certification (cont.)

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- 4) You need to be in the field for X years to be board eligible (i.e., ready to sit for the written examination).”
- ✓ Historically there was a period post licensure that applicants had to wait prior to being board eligible.
  - ✓ This is no longer the case.
  - ✓ Once a candidate has completed the necessary training and licensure requisites, he or she is considered board eligible.



# Common Questions & Myths Regarding Board Certification (cont.)

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5. The preparation process for seeking board certification is hugely time-consuming.
  - ABCN's goal is to facilitate this process and make it as easy as possible for students/trainees.
  - Early Entry Application: Allows graduate students to apply for ABPP while in training.
  - A number of web resources for this process are available.



# ABPP Early Entry Application

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- Submission of the application and a \$25 fee allows you to start the process and ABPP will “bank” your credentials as you complete your training and credentials
- You can submit each credential/license as they are completed and ABPP will simply update your file
- Saves you \$100



# Resources To Guide Your ABPP Preparation

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## 1) ABPP ([www.abpp.org](http://www.abpp.org))

- ✓ An overview of ABPP and what board certification means to psychology and to the public
- ✓ A summary description of the ABPP and ABCN requirements
- ✓ Important forms that you will need at each step of the ABPP/ABCN certification process.



# Resources To Guide Your ABPP Preparation (cont.)

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## 2) ABCN ([www.theabcn.org](http://www.theabcn.org))

- ✓ A description of ABCN and advantages to board certification
- ✓ A detailed description of the ABCN requirements
- ✓ An overview of the examination process
- ✓ A listing of examination dates and deadlines
- ✓ Answers to “frequently asked questions”
- ✓ Links to the application materials at the ABPP site and study materials at the AACN site



# Resources To Guide Your ABPP Preparation (cont).

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## 3) AACN ([www.theaacn.org](http://www.theaacn.org))

- ✓ A description of the AACN and its mission
- ✓ Information on relevant educational programs
- ✓ Information re: the AACN mentorship program A study guide
- ✓ AACN-sponsored seminars on the ABPP/ABCN certification process at the major neuropsychology conferences
- ✓ AACN Oxford Workshop Book: Board Certification in Clinical Neuropsychology: A guide to becoming ABPP/ABCN certified without sacrificing your sanity

*\* Note: AACN and the authors receive financial compensation from the sale of this book.*



# Resources To Guide Your ABPP Preparation (cont).

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- 3) **BRAIN** (<http://brain.aacnwiki.org>; anyone can access)
- ✓ Study outlines, flash cards, sample tests, and sample study schedules
  - ✓ A listserv comprised of peer neuropsychologists who are already boarded or who are working through the process (need to be licensed to join)
  - ✓ Advice on how to approach each step of the certification process (both via the website and the listserv)
  - ✓ For listserv members, coordinated study and support groups for the ABPP/ABCN written and oral examinations



# The 4 Steps to Board Certification through ABPP/ABCN

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- (1) Application
- (2) Written Examination
- (3) Practice Samples
- (4) Oral Examination





# General Information about the ABPP Process

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## Fees

- (1) Application - \$125\*
- (2) Written Examination - \$300
- (3) Practice Samples - \$250
- (4) Oral Examination - \$450



\* ABPP Early Entry Application (\$25)



# The Application and Credential Review – Basic Eligibility Criteria

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All Applicants must have:

1. A doctorate in Psychology (specialty can include clinical, counseling, educational, etc.)
2. A state/provincial license to practice psychology
3. \*Specialty training in Neuropsychology (specifics depend on when you completed your degree)



\*Specific training criteria for Canadian Applicants are available at the ABCN website



# The Application and Credential Review – Basic Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

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For all candidates who complete training on or after  
1/1/2005:

- ❑ Your background needs to conform to the training model of the Houston conference.
- ❑ Equivalent of a 2-year full-time supervised post-doctoral residency/fellowship in clinical neuropsychology.



# The Application and Credential Review – Basic Eligibility Criteria (cont.)

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## Basic Training Areas (see also application)

1. Basic neurosciences (microarchitecture of the brain, neurochemistry, etc)
2. Basic neurosciences Clinical Neurology
3. Neuroanatomy
4. Neuropathology
5. Clinical Neuropsychological Assessment
6. Psychological Assessment
7. Psychological Intervention
8. Psychopathology

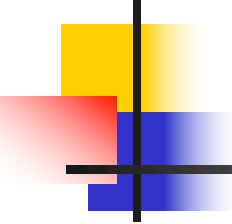


# The Written Examination

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## What is the Process?

- 100 Question Test – 2 hour time limit
    - + 25 unscored questions that are used for beta testing psychometric purposes
  - $\geq 70$  or higher score passes
  - Administered at Prometric Centers across the country during 4 (2-week) time periods each year
- 
- The test is developed and normed with PES – the same company who writes the EPPP



# The Written Examination – Dos and Don'ts for Your Preparation

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## Do:

- Brush up on applied neuropsychology concepts
- Study diseases, disorders, and syndromes affecting the CNS
- Know your gross and functional neuroanatomy well
- Review behavioral neurology topics
- Revisit DSM and psychiatric disorders
- Remember to look over relevant psychometric and statistical topics
- Consider taking practice exams available through BRAIN and the APPCN Training Programs

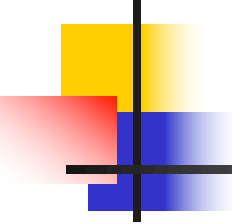


# The Written Examination – Dos and Don'ts for Your Preparation (cont.)

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## **DON'T:**

- Overfocus on any one specific topic
- Lose the forest for the neuroanatomical trees
- Worry about esoteric research methods or stats concepts
- Spend much time on ethics at this stage of the process



# The Written Examination – Important Resources

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- ✓ BRAIN website – study notes, flashcards, sample tests
- ✓ BRAIN listserv – peer support, help finding study groups, etc.
- ✓ Peer Study groups
- ✓ AACN Study Guide
- ✓ AACN Mentor





# The Practice Sample Review – The Process

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You submit to ABCN (online via ScholarOne) two of your **ORIGINAL** neuropsychological evaluation reports, as well as:

- ✓ All raw data
- ✓ Test score summary sheets
- ✓ Professional data sheet
- ✓ Cover letter (optional)
- ✓ Fee



# The Practice Sample Review – How to Pick Your Cases

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- Do NOT try to find the perfect case – there is no such thing
- Instead:
  - ✓ Pick cases that are moderately complex, reflect your patient population, and demonstrate your understanding of neuropsychological principles



# The Practice Sample Review – How to Pick Your Cases (cont.)

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- Have colleagues critique your cases – including at least one ABPP/ABCN neuropsychologist
  - Neuropsychologists who review practice samples will be the ones deciding whether you actually pass
- **DON'T** have colleagues or mentors help you re-write a report but **Do** have them help you to determine if your case(s) are good choices for submitting



# The Oral Examination – The last hurdle!

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## 3 Sections of the Oral Examination

- Review of Professional and Ethical Issues
- Practice Sample Review
- Fact-Finding



# The Oral Examination – What is the Process?

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- Held twice a year in Chicago (in May & October/November)
- 3 1-hour blocks completed back-to-back
- Results are typically provided within 10 days



# The Review of Professional and Ethical Issues – What is Being Assessed?

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1. Your knowledge of current APA/CPA ethical codes;
2. Your understanding of HIPAA and its relevance to your practice; and
3. Your educational history, professional practice and contributions to the field.



# The Review of Professional and Ethical Issues – What is the Task?

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## Ethical Issues:

- You will be asked to identify ethical breaches in a vignette
- You will be asked to provide an ethical dilemma that you have faced and resolved

## Professional Issues:

- You will provide a summary of your educational history, professional practice, and contributions to the field of neuropsychology



# Dos and Don'ts for the Ethics Portion of the Oral Examination

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## DO:

- Review your ethical codes standards, and pertinent laws relating to your daily practice (e.g., HIPAA)
- Review some articles/books that cover ethics applied to neuropsychology

## DON'T:

- Memorize standards and numbers
- Plan on “winging it” based on the 1 or 2 times you read the ethical codes when they last came out





# Practice Samples Review – What is Being Assessed?

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- Your knowledge of your cases (pediatric or adult), including the diagnosed disorder and related conditions, as well as applied principles of functional neuroanatomy
- Your knowledge of psychometric principles, including your choice of test battery and its appropriateness for your particular patients



# Practice Samples Review – What is the Task?

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- Your examiner will ask you specific questions regarding the two cases you submitted
  - ✓ Questions are developed by your examiner and by the 3 (or 4) reviewers who evaluated your Practice Samples



# The Fact-Finding – What is the Task?

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After selecting your case (either a child or adult vignette) you will be expected to:

- 1) Gather all relevant case information including:
  - presenting concerns
  - relevant history
  - behavioral observations
  - testing results

# The Fact-Finding – What is the Task? (cont.)



- 2) Summarize your impressions including your thoughts on:
- ✓ Differential diagnosis (& reasoning behind ruling diagnoses out)
  - ✓ Likely neurological localization (at least in terms of anterior/posterior and left/right and/or subcortical implicating profiles)
  - ✓ Possible etiologies
  - ✓ Relevant social and psychological issues and their impact on the case and/or neuropsychological data
  - ✓ A concise summary of the testing results
  - ✓ Recommendations for treatment and possible prognoses



# The Fact-Finding – Other Important Details

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- You will have 50 minutes to collect the data and summarize your findings.
  - ✓ Time management is one of the biggest challenges for this task
- You will be examined using real clinical cases



# The Fact-Finding – Steps to Success (cont.)

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Think about how to use your time (e.g.):

- 5 minutes to write out your template
- 20 minutes to collect the patient's history
- 10 minutes to collect, review, and discuss test data
- 5-10 minutes to summarize the history, data conceptualization, & present dx conclusions
- 5-10 minutes to discuss other possible etiologies if the examiner provides new information to you



# The Fact-Finding – Other Important Details

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- The goal of the Fact-Finding is not simply to figure out the patient's medical condition. It is to show the examiner how you approach neuropsychological evaluations.
- You do NOT have to determine the diagnosis or etiology of your case to pass!!!
  - Conversely, getting diagnosis correct is not sufficient for you to pass



# The ABPP/ABCN Process – Final Word of Encouragement

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- ABPP/ABCN board certification is not an elitist goal – it is doable for anyone who has trained to be a neuropsychologist
- The PROCESS itself makes you a better neuropsychologist which in and of itself is worth pursuing.



# The ABPP/ABCN Process – Final Words of Encouragement

- Consider all of the things you have accomplished (or will!) :
  - ✓ Graduated college
  - ✓ Completed GRE
  - ✓ Applied to graduate school
  - ✓ Graduate course load
  - ✓ Master's thesis proposal/defense
  - ✓ Qualifying examination
  - ✓ Research requirements
  - ✓ Teaching assistantships
  - ✓ Clinical practica
  - ✓ Dissertation proposal/defense
  - ✓ Internship
  - ✓ Postdoctoral fellowship
  - ✓ Licensing examination
  - ✓ **ABPP Board Certification**
- Yes the boarding process is challenging, but the short-term investment (like many of the other things you have accomplished) is well-worth the long-term benefit!