



Issue Brief: National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME)

What is the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME)?

The NBME is the independent, not-for-profit organization that creates the standardized exams required for medical licensure in the United States. The purpose of the licensure examinations is to help protect the public by granting medical licenses only to those able to pass the examinations. The four tests that make up the system are collectively known as the U.S. Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE).

The relationship between the NBME and the U.S. Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE):

The NBME, along with the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), co-sponsors the USMLE. The USMLE is currently administered in four parts: Step 1, Step 2 Clinical Knowledge, Step 2 Clinical Skills, and Step 3. A passing score on all steps is required in order to attain medical licensure.

What else does the NBME do for medical students?

The NBME offers various student services online. It administers the National Licensing Examination Services Website (NLES), which enables medical students to sign up for Steps 1 and 2. (You do not take Step 3 of the USMLE until residency.) For a fee, it provides students with practice USMLE exam questions representative of the level of difficulty on the actual exam, through the NBME Self-Assessment Services (NSAS). The NBME also administers the basic and clinical science subject examinations in use by the majority of American medical schools as end-of-block evaluations, as well as the Comprehensive Basic Science Examination.

The relationship between the AMA and the NBME:

The approximately 80 members of the NBME governing body represent numerous organizations, both public and private. The AMA has two seats on the NBME, as well as four seats on the NBME's Advisory Committee for Medical School Programs, whose members meet face-to-face twice a year and many more times via conference call. The committee "is charged to improve communication and to enhance relationships between the medical education community and the NBME in areas of mutual interest." They are in constant two-way communication with medical schools and students through the members of the committee.

The AMA-MSS Governing Council nominates a medical student once every two years to serve as a liaison to the Advisory Committee; this student presents the MSS' point of view on all matters pertaining to NBME governance, test development, and implementation. Currently, the AMA-MSS Liaison to the NBME is Alyce Belonis. The AMA-RFS also has an NBME seat.

In addition, Peter Ragusa, a former AMA Government Relations Advocacy Fellow, is the sole student member on the Committee to Evaluate the USMLE Program (CEUP), in which NBME plays a large role. This recently-formed committee is comprised of stakeholders such as medical school administrators, residents, and residency program directors. The committee members are working together to decide what aspects of the USMLE should be revised to create a more effective tool to evaluate students and residents for medical licensure.

The AMA and the AMA-MSS are currently monitoring the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills exam to make sure it is a validated method of evaluating clinical skills and professionalism. In addition, the AMA-MSS Governing Council was invited to give a presentation at the FSMB national meeting in May 2007 which, to our knowledge, is the first time this has ever happened. To help us continue to work on the CSAE issue, please take a look at our CSAE issue brief, and if you have taken the Step 2 CS, take our survey about your experience!

www.surveysolutions.com/ama/step2cs.htm

For More, Contact Us:

- Heidi Hullinger, Chair, AMA-MSS Committee on Medical Education: hh147850@bcm.edu
- Peter Ragusa, CEUP: peter@peterragusa.com
- Alyca Belonis, NBME: avb23@drexel.edu
- Maristella Evangelista, AMA Council on Medical Education: m.stella@gmail.com