

National Board Report

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Irregular Behavior Updates

The NBVME conducted an irregular behavior hearing on February 11. Following the hearing, the NBVME Executive Committee voted to invalidate the candidate's December 2006 passing score, and to prohibit him from taking the NAVLE again for a period of five years. Prior to being allowed to take the NAVLE again, he will be required to pay a fine to cover exposure of test materials and costs associated with the hearing. The candidate subsequently appealed the decision, and the appeal was considered on July 25. The appeal involved all members of the NBVME except those who participated in the February hearing. The board reviewed all of the evidence in the case, and voted to uphold the decision of the Executive Committee.

Another hearing was held on May 28, involving a candidate who had received test materials from the above candidate in 2006. The hearing committee voted not to take disciplinary action against the candidate because of her cooperation with the investigation and because there was no evidence to indicate that she had shared test content with other candidates.

A candidate was observed making written notes during the April 2009 NAVLE administration, in apparent violation of the NBVME's policy. The candidate's score report was held pending review. The Executive Committee subsequently decided not to impose any sanctions on the candidate, who did not pass the examination, but she was warned that her actions violated the board's policy on irregular behavior.

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD
Executive Director

July NBVME Meeting Report

The NBVME met in La Jolla, California on July 25. Minutes of the meeting were sent to constituent groups in early August. Following are some meeting highlights.

During its Executive Session, the board approved a 2009-2010 budget, projecting income of \$2.8 million and expenses of \$2.5 million. The board approved an increase in the NAVLE fee for the 2010-2011 testing cycle from \$525 to \$550.

The board reviewed its present strategic plan, and agreed to revise and update the plan in January to cover the next three years. Two new action items were added to the plan, including streamlining the NAVLE application and approval process, and enhancing the NBVME's relationship with veterinary schools.

The board agreed to reinstate the interim NAVLE school score reports in 2010. The reports were discontinued this year because it was thought that they would not be necessary, given that individual candidate score reports are now available to accredited schools for candidates who grant consent on their NAVLE application. However, several schools expressed a desire to continue receiving the interim reports, which are issued in February and show schools how their students performed on the fall NAVLE.

The board reviewed a report prepared by the NBME on NAVLE candidate pacing. Concern had been expressed that time constraints might make it more difficult for candidates to read and answer longer items with clinical

vignettes that are now commonly used on the NAVLE. The report documented that the average word count had increased by about 20 words per item in recent years, but that there was no evidence that this has had an impact on candidate performance, whether they take the examination in English or French.

As recommended by legal counsel, the board approved minor changes to its irregular behavior policy and hearing policy.

Outreach is a key component of the NBVME's strategic plan. During 2008-2009, the NBVME completed outreach visits to 21 licensing boards. Each visit involves two NBVME members, who engage the boards in a directed dialog about the NBVME, what it does, and how the NBVME can better meet the needs of licensing boards. The board voted to continue the visits in the coming year, and the goal is to complete as many visits as possible by June 2010.

The board reviewed, but did not change, its policy on how break time is allotted and used by NAVLE candidates. The NAVLE is structured as six blocks of 60 items in 65 minutes, with a minimum of 45 minutes of break time during the day. Breaks may be taken only between blocks, and when candidates return from breaks, they cannot see items from previous blocks. The candidate bulletin states that candidates may not access reference materials or use telephones or other electronic devices during the examination. Candidate information materials will be revised to make it clear that this policy applies to the

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NBVME AND NBME EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES FOR COLLABORATION

In 1998, the NBVME selected the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) as the vendor for its new computer-based licensing examination, the NAVLE. Since the NAVLE was first offered in 2000, the NBME has developed other examinations for the NBVME, including the Qualifying Examination and the NAVLE Self-Assessments.

Last year, the NBME approached the NBVME with the idea of changing the relationship between the two organizations from a vendor-client relationship to an arrangement where the two groups could collaborate on joint projects, sharing risks and benefits. Despite differences in size, the NBVME and the NBME have a lot in common. Both are independent not-for-profit testing organizations whose missions are to develop examinations. Both the NBVME and the NBME interact closely with licensure candidates, licensing boards, schools, foreign graduate certification programs, and professional organizations.

Last December, Drs. Feinberg and Boyce met in Philadelphia with NBME president Dr. Donald Melnick, Senior Vice President Dr. Peter Scoles, and other NBME staff to begin to explore the idea of a possible collaboration. The NBME presently has several collaborative relationships with other organizations. These include the United States Medical

Licensing Examination (USMLE), which is jointly owned and sponsored by the NBME and the Federation of State Medical Boards, and the USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills Examination (a communications examination using standardized patients), which is jointly sponsored by the NBME and the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates.

On July 24, representatives from the NBVME and the NBME met in La Jolla, this time joined by NBVME members Drs. Linda Blythe and Mike

Thomas, and three members of the NBME's Executive Board. The group agreed to continue to explore the idea of collaborative relationships, possibly beginning with a new comprehensive examination for veterinary schools that would draw on the NBME's experience developing similar examinations for use by medical schools.

At its meeting the following day, the NBVME designated Drs. Gackstetter and Hedrick to join the group for future meetings with the NBME.

July NBVME Meeting Report (continued from page 1)

entire examination administration, even though Prometric staff cannot monitor candidates if they leave the testing center on breaks (to use the rest room or eat, for example).

The board reviewed the NAVLE re-take policy, which states that candidates cannot take the NAVLE more than five times, that they may not sit for the examination at a date that is later than five years from their initial attempt, and that each of the final two attempts must be at least one year from the previous attempt. The policy took effect with the fall 2007 administration, and is now beginning to impact candidate eligibility. Many licensing boards have not adopted the policy, resulting in a situation where candidates can be

approved to take the NAVLE through some boards and not others. In addition, scores obtained by candidates who pass the NAVLE under circumstances not consistent with the policy will be accepted by some boards and not by others. While this certainly is not an ideal situation, the NBVME will work with the AAVSB and individual licensing boards to ensure that candidate attempts and scores are accurately documented and reported.

NBVME officers for 2009-2010 include Drs. Linda Blythe, Chair; Jay Hedrick, Chair-Elect; Ben Franklin, Secretary-Treasurer, and Dennis Feinberg, Past Chair.

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Dennis A. Feinberg, DVM, *Past Chair*; Linda L. Blythe, DVM, PhD, *Chair*; Benjamin Franklin, Jr., DVM, *Secretary-Treasurer*; Meg Glattly, DVM; Gary D. Gackstetter, DVM, MPH, PhD; Thomas B. Hairgrove, DVM, DABVP; Jay Hedrick, DVM, *Chair-Elect*; Francis A. Kallfelz, DVM, PhD, DACVN; Sylvie Latour, DVM; Lila Miller, DVM; Ellen L. O'Connor, *Public Member*; Mike Thomas, DVM; Rick Tubbs, DVM, MS, MBA, DACT, DABVP. John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD, *Executive Director*

Examination Development Advisory Board

The NBVME appoints 10 veterinarians to its Examination Development Advisory Board (EDAB) as content experts for the main species content areas of the NAVLE. EDAB members are responsible for identifying NAVLE item writers, and participate in annual NAVLE form review meetings. They also assist with other examination development and review activities.

The NBVME was saddened to learn of the death of Dr. Jeff Tyler in May. At the time of his death, Dr. Tyler was completing his third year as a member of the EDAB. Prior to joining the EDAB, he served for several years as a NAVLE item writer. A tribute to Dr. Tyler is posted on the NBVME's web site. Earlier this month, the NBVME

made a contribution to the Dr. Jeffrey W. Tyler Youth Soccer Foundation in his honor.

At the July meeting, Dr. Mark Hilton was appointed to the EDAB to succeed Dr. Tyler as one of the two members in the bovine content area. Dr. Hilton is a Clinical Associate Professor in the School of Veterinary Medicine at Purdue University. A 1983 Purdue graduate, Dr. Hilton is certified by the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners in



Dr. Mark Hilton

beef cattle practice. He practiced in Iowa for 16 years before joining the faculty at Purdue.

EDAB members are appointed to three-year terms, and can serve a maximum of three terms. At the July meeting, Dr. Darcy Shaw of the University of Prince Edward Island was appointed to a second term on the EDAB in the canine content area, and Dr. Patricia Provost of Tufts University was appointed to a second term in the equine content area.

NAVLE Job Analysis Survey Is Underway

As part of the 2009 NAVLE Job Analysis project, the Job Analysis Advisory Committee reviewed and approved a survey that asks practicing veterinarians to document activities they perform and diagnoses they encounter in practice. The survey is now available. Earlier this month, the AVMA and the Canadian VMA sent e-mail messages to approximately 4,200 and 700 members, respectively, inviting them to complete the on-line survey. The survey is also available through a link on the NBVME's web site (www.nbvme.org/?id=115), and it will remain open until late August.

The Advisory Committee will meet on October 7 to review the results of the survey and prepare recommendations for the NBVME to consider in January. The result of the process will be a revised NAVLE test blueprint.

CHANGES PROPOSED TO NAVLE APPLICATION PROCESS

One of the new action items in the NBVME's strategic plan is to streamline the NAVLE application and approval process.

When the NAVLE was first offered, all candidates applied for the examination through a licensing board. Boards also reported scores to candidates. Beginning in 2004 with Virginia, the NBVME office agreed to approve candidates and report scores on behalf of individual licensing boards, at the request of those boards. For the 2009-2010 testing cycle, the NBVME office is approving candidates on behalf of 15 licensing boards: CO, FL, IN, MD, ME, MI, NE, NC, NH, NJ, NY, NV, PA, UT, and VA. Last year, candidates approved through boards for which the NBVME processed applications were able to access their pass/fail status on-line, and beginning this year, they can submit their state application on-line and pay the fee by credit card.

Last year, the NBVME presented a proposal that would eliminate the separate state board approval step, and

have all candidates apply for the NAVLE only to the NBVME. The NBVME would approve candidates according to agreed-upon approval criteria, and would report scores to all candidates. When candidates applied for licensure, they would request that their NAVLE score be reported to one licensing board of their choice.

Most licensing boards supported the proposal, but a few expressed some concerns. The proposal was subsequently modified, and a revised version was sent this month to all licensing boards in advance of the September 24-26 meeting of the American Association of Veterinary State Boards. Assuming the concerns of all licensing boards can be met, the earliest that this proposal could be implemented would be for the 2010-2011 testing cycle.

The NBVME believes that the proposal would make the NAVLE application process easier and less confusing for candidates. Persons interested in obtaining a copy of the proposal should contact the NBVME office.

NBVME Examination Updates

NAVLE®

The application receipt deadline for the November-December 2009 NAVLE testing window was August 1. Scheduling permits should be mailed to the majority of candidates by late September.

A new NAVLE Tutorial is now available on the NBVME's web site. This fall, the NAVLE will be given using a new test driver that includes several features not available on the driver used for previous administrations. Therefore, all candidates are advised to download and run the free tutorial before taking the actual examination.

NAVLE Self-Assessments, consisting of 200 items formatted like the actual examination, continue to be available for purchase on the NBVME's web site. Each assessment is \$50. Beginning in September, assessments will include a prediction of future NAVLE performance based on the candidate's performance on the assessment.

A copy of the 2008-2009 NAVLE Technical Report was mailed to each of the NBVME's constituent organizations earlier this month. The report is also available on the NBVME's web site, as is a separate 2008-2009 candidate performance report. A total of 4,211 candidates took the NAVLE during the 2008-2009 testing cycle, including 3,009 criterion candidates. The passing rate for criterion candidates at graduation (including those who passed on their first attempt in the fall, and those who failed in the fall but passed on repeating the examination in April before graduation) was 97%.

Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination (QE), a 300-item web-based basic science examination, is the step three requirement of the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence (PAVE). The NBVME office has made arrangements to administer the QE to 179 candidates at 16 locations on September 17. For the first time, the

QE will be given in South Korea. Future QE administrations are planned for January 21 and May 13, 2010. The 2009-2010 QE Bulletin of Information for Candidates is available on the NBVME's web site. A copy of the 2008-2009 QE Technical Report was mailed to all licensing boards that accept PAVE certificates earlier this month. The report is also available on the NBVME's web site.

Veterinary Clinical Skills Assessment (VCSA)

The VCSA is a two day hands-on examination of clinical and communication skills, used as an option for step four of the PAVE program. The next administration will be January 9-10, 2010 at Cedar Valley College in Dallas, Texas. Candidates apply for the VCSA through the AAVSB office. A Technical Report on the VCSA, covering all administrations to date, was mailed in April to licensing boards that accept PAVE certification.