

National Board Report

A Quarterly Newsletter of the National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners

Volume 15 Issue 2

© National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners

June 2010

A Good Foundation

Three years ago, my wife and I built a vacation and retirement house in the badlands of western North Dakota. We had never done this before, and it was a fascinating experience to see the project go from bare ground to a finished structure. Although the finish work is what everyone can see, the foundation is the most important part, because everything literally rests on it. The workers who lay the foundation don't get a lot of recognition, but if they don't do their work properly, the structure won't be around very long.

The same can be said of a veterinary medical education. I have been thinking about this a great deal lately, in the context of a two-step NAVLE and the NAVMEC discussions. My admitted bias is basic science, having taught microbiology at three veterinary schools. I believe the best way to prepare students for the future is to give them a solid foundation in the basic veterinary medical sciences. New diseases will appear, new therapies will be developed, and the profession will face new challenges that were not anticipated when students were in school. The students who will be best prepared to deal with these things are those who have a sound knowledge of basic sciences, including anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, microbiology, and pathology, along with an understanding of the scientific method and critical thinking skills. That is also what separates a medical professional from a well-trained technician.

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD
Executive Director

Two-Step NAVLE and NAVMEC

As reported in the March issue of the *National Board Report*, the NBVME is taking a serious look at the idea of a two-step NAVLE. Dr. Peter Scoles, Senior Vice President of the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME), in a special session at the January NBVME meeting, outlined the NBME's experiences in developing the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE®). The USMLE is presently a three-step examination. USMLE Step 1 is administered to candidates at the end of the second year of medical school, and focuses on basic medical sciences that form the foundation of clinical practice. Step 2 is taken at graduation, and includes a part that assesses the candidate's clinical communication skills. Step 3 is taken during the first year of residency. Implementation of the three-step USMLE has resulted in a common licensing pathway in the US for all MD's, including those trained at foreign, non-accredited medical schools.

In January, Dr. Scoles outlined his ideas for a two-step NAVLE that would include a basic sciences step 1, and a step 2 focusing on clinical practice. Each step could be shorter than the NBVME's present Qualifying Examination and NAVLE, which are 6.5 and 7.5 hours, respectively.

Dr. Scoles was invited to attend the second national meeting of the North American Veterinary Medical Education Consortium (NAVMEC) in Kansas City in April, where he shared many of the same ideas. A copy of his presentation is available at aavmc.org.

The NBVME is a sponsoring member of NAVMEC, and Dr. Mike Thomas is Vice-Chair of the NAVMEC Board of Directors. Drs. Linda Blythe, NBVME Chair, and Jay Hedrick, Chair-Elect, have attended each of the two NAVMEC national meetings to date. NBVME member Dr. Lila Miller participates in NAVMEC as a representative of her employer, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

A two-step NAVLE could help veterinary schools address future societal needs in several ways. A basic science NAVLE step 1 could allow schools to offer more curriculum flexibility, while assuring licensing boards that all students have an adequate understanding of basic veterinary medical sciences. A clinical sciences NAVLE step 2 taken at the end of the third year would give licensing boards assurance that all graduates continue to have a minimum level of competence in clinical practice involving all common animal species. It would also allow those students who passed Step 2 at the end of their third year to spend their final year focusing on topics of interest, either at their own school, at another school, or in other practice settings.

The NBVME looks forward to participating in the third NAVMEC meeting in July, which will focus on accreditation, testing and licensure. Consistent with its mission, the NBVME stands ready to develop and deliver examinations needed by licensing boards and other entities that assess professional competency.

NAVLE RETAKE POLICY

In 2005, the NBVME adopted a NAVLE retake policy. The policy, which is a recommendation from the NBVME to each licensing board, states that candidates may take the NAVLE no more than five times in a five year period, with a year between the third and fourth and fourth and fifth attempts. The policy took effect beginning with the fall 2007 administration; any attempts by a candidate prior to that time do not count toward the limit. If state law permits a candidate to take the NAVLE more than five times, or if state law restricts an applicant to fewer than five attempts, state law prevails.

A table on the NBVME's web site lists what individual licensing boards have told us regarding their adoption of the policy. Some boards have adopted it as written. Some have adopted the policy, but will accept a transferred NAVLE score from a candidate who takes it through another jurisdiction that does not follow the policy. Some boards do not have a limit on retakes, and some have their own limit.

The policy was developed by an NBVME-AAVSB task force. The NBVME believes that five attempts at passing the NAVLE should be enough for any candidate, and that additional attempts can jeopardize the security and integrity of the examination. The NBVME office keeps track of candidate attempts and assists licensing boards in implementing the policy.

Licensing Board Outreach Visits

In July 2008, the NBVME approved a plan for NBVME members to visit individual licensing boards. The goal was to visit about 20 boards during the first year, and to make a serious effort to schedule a visit to all other boards that would agree to one by the July 2010 meeting. Visits are done by two-person teams, using a presentation that describes how the NBVME is organized and what it does. The visits help licensing board members understand the work that

goes into the development of the national licensing examination, and provides them an opportunity to ask questions and provide direct input to the NBVME.

To date, visits have been made to a total of 41 boards, with three additional visits scheduled by the end of the summer. At the July meeting, the NBVME will review the results of these visits and decide on a follow-up plan.

What Is the NBVME?

First in a series

One of the consistent findings of the licensing board outreach visits is a relative lack of understanding on the part of licensing board members of what the NBVME is and what it does. Given that licensing boards spend most of their time dealing with regulatory matters and disciplinary cases rather than national licensing examinations, that is not particularly surprising. However, we thought it would be helpful to have a series of brief articles in the newsletter dealing with this topic. We will not duplicate the detailed history of the NBVME that appeared in a 17-part series in the *National Board Report* from May 1996 through November 2000. Past issues of the newsletter are available at nbvme.org.

The National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners is an independent not for profit corporation with 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service. It was incorporated in the State of Illinois in October 1994. Quoting from its Bylaws, "The corporation is organized and operated for the purpose of providing standard examinations that may be used by the states, territories, or dependencies of the United States, or provinces of Canada as part of their licensure procedure for veterinarians. The Corporation may also develop standard examinations for other clients in veterinary medicine and veterinary technology, and engage in such other activities as permitted under the Act."

The *National Board Report* is published quarterly by the National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (NBVME®), PO Box 1356, Bismarck, ND 58502. Phone (701) 224-0332, fax (701) 224-0435, mail@nbvme.org, <http://www.nbvme.org>.

The purpose of the *National Board Report* is to educate, to inform, and to communicate information about the objectives and programs of the NBVME. The opinions and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official opinions, views, or policies of the NBVME or any of its members, unless expressly so stated.

Dennis A. Feinberg, DVM, *Past Chair*; Linda L. Blythe, DVM, PhD, *Chair*; Joyceanne Fick, *Public Member*; 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*; Jayne Jensen, DVM; Sylvie Latour, DVM; Lila Miller, DVM; Mike Thomas, DVM; Rick Tubbs, DVM, MS, MBA, DACT, DABVP. John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD, *Executive Director*

2010 NAVLE Form Review

Each spring, the NBVME conducts a review of draft forms of the NAVLE to be administered in the coming fall-spring testing cycle. The review ensures that the test items are relevant to entry-level private clinical practice, and that the forms are balanced with regard to content. On April 14-15, 25 participants met at the offices of the

National Board of Medical Examiners in Philadelphia to review and approve NAVLE forms to be administered in the November-December 2010 and April 2011 testing windows. Participants included 11 of the 13 NBVME members, 8 of the 10 members of the NBVME's Examination Development Advisory Board, two veterinarians

designated by the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB), and four recent veterinary graduates. This year's recent graduates were Drs. Amber Leistner (Purdue 2007), Mandi Maclean (Saskatchewan 2007), Amanda Price (UC Davis 2006) and Leah Steinberg (Tufts 2008).



2010 NAVLE Form Reviewers

Seated (l to r): Lila Miller, Patricia Provost, Mike Thomas, Susan Little, Norman LaFauce, and Meg Glattly. *Second row:* Steve Colquhoun, Rick Tubbs, Amber Leistner, Mandi Maclean, Julie Fixman, Mark Hilton, Helen Tuzio, Sylvie Latour, Joyceanne Fick, Benjamin Darien, Linda Blythe, and Ben Franklin. *Back row:* Jay Hedrick, Jon Betts, Leah Steinberg, Dennis Feinberg, Karen Lehe, Amanda Price, and Gary Gackstetter.

July NBVME Meeting



The NBVME will hold its next meeting from Friday afternoon through Sunday morning, July 16-18, in Las Vegas. The Nevada site was chosen to coincide with the third national NAVMEC meeting in Las Vegas July 14-16. The NBVME's Saturday morning General Session is open to guests. Dr. Linda Blythe will chair the meeting.

On Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, the board will update its strategic plan for the next three years, in sessions facilitated by Mr. Michael Barrett.

Contact the NBVME office for more information on the July meeting.

NBVME Examination Updates

NAVLE®

A total of 749 candidates took the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) during the April 12-24, 2010 testing window, a decrease of 15 from April 2009. Scores were reported to licensing boards on May 10.

Applications for the fall 2010 NAVLE testing window are now being accepted, and the NBVME application receipt deadline is August 1. The 2010-2011 edition of the NAVLE Bulletin of Information for Candidates is available on the NBVME's web site, www.nbvme.org. The NAVLE fee for the 2010-11 testing windows is \$550, an increase of \$25 over last year.

All NAVLE candidates must be approved by a licensing board to take the examination. For the 2010-11 testing cycle, the NBVME office will approve candidates applying through 21 states: Colorado, Florida, Indiana,

Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia. These candidates can complete a state NAVLE application and pay the corresponding \$50 fee on-line, through the NBVME's web site.

Qualifying Examination (QE)

The QE is a 300-item web-based basic science examination, and is the step three requirement of the Program for the Assessment of Veterinary Education Equivalence (PAVE). The QE is also used by several accredited veterinary schools as an outside measure of basic science competence.

The QE was administered to 134 PAVE candidates on May 13. The examination was offered in St. Kitts, Grenada, Grand Cayman, England, Ireland, Australia, and at 12 sites in

the US. The May QE was also administered to 97 students at the Western University College of Veterinary Medicine and to one student at the Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine who did not take the examination in January. Scores were reported on June 17.

Future administrations are planned for September 16, 2010, and January 20 and May 12, 2011. The 2010-2011 QE Bulletin of Information for Candidates is 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, and is used as an option for step four of the PAVE program. It is scheduled to be administered next on January 8-9, 2011 at Cedar Valley College in Dallas, Texas. Candidates apply for the VCSA through the AAVSB office.