

National Board Report

A Quarterly Newsletter of the National Board Examination Committee for Veterinary Medicine

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Ethics

This month, I had the opportunity to participate in a national conference on veterinary bioethics at Tuskegee University. I took the opportunity to think about ethics and the licensing examination program.

Item writers have an ethical responsibility to ensure that the items they write accurately reflect entry level private clinical practice. They must also ensure that their items do not give an unfair advantage to any candidate or group of candidates (discussing items with their students, or using NAVLE images in teaching materials, for example). Item reviewers have an ethical responsibility not to disclose the content of the examination to others.

Candidates have an important ethical responsibility in the area of examination security. All candidates must sign a statement that they will not disclose the content of the examination to anyone. This reflects the fact that licensing examinations are costly and time consuming to develop. Disclosure of items is a form of theft, and ultimately results in increased costs to other candidates, not to mention costs to society if unqualified individuals are able to pass the licensing examination using fraudulent means.

Organizations that sponsor examination programs have an ethical responsibility to treat all candidates fairly, and to maintain a "customer service" perspective when interacting with candidates and licensing boards. I hope our "customers" will let us know if we ever fail to meet our ethical obligations.

John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD
Executive Director

One Year and Counting

The North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE) will be offered to candidates for the first time one year from now. The first testing window will run from November 20 to December 16, 2000. Here is an update on plans for the NAVLE.

FAQ now available

The NBEC recently prepared a NAVLE "Frequently Asked Questions" document. Designed to address most of the common questions that candidates and licensing boards have about the new computer based examination, the FAQ has been added to the NBEC's web site.

Web site updated

The NBEC's web site <www.nbec.org> was revised and updated earlier this month. The above mentioned FAQ document and a copy of the NAVLE test blueprint were added to a new NAVLE page on the web site. As new information on the NAVLE becomes available, the web site will be updated accordingly.

School visits begin

Earlier this year, the NBEC offered to send a representative to each North American veterinary school to provide an overview of the new NAVLE program. The Executive Director gave presentations at the University of Pennsylvania, Auburn University, and Tuskegee University in November, and plans to visit the University of Montreal in early December. Other school visits are being scheduled. Members of the NBEC and the NBEC's Examination Development Subcommittee, many of whom are veterinary school faculty members, are also available to give NAVLE presentations to students and faculty.

New items reviewed

Earlier this month, 22 of the 25 NAVLE item writers met at the office of the National Board of Medical Examiners in Philadelphia to review over 1200 new items written for the NAVLE this year. The reviewers decided whether each item should be accepted and added to the item bank or revised. Many excellent new items, including items with graphics, were added to the NAVLE item bank. Several hundred additional items with graphic information were prepared this year by the Professional Examination Service, in fulfillment of its item development responsibilities to the NBEC.

School contacts identified

The NBEC has now identified a contact person at each veterinary school in North America. These individuals will serve as a primary source of information on the NAVLE as we move closer to implementation next year.

Board contracts are on the way

The NBEC is putting final touches on a contract to be executed between the NBEC and each licensing board. The contracts will be sent to boards in early December. Along with the contract will be a questionnaire asking each board how it would prefer to handle NAVLE applications and candidate fees.

NBEC meeting

On Saturday afternoon, January 22, 2000, the NBEC will meet in general session in Phoenix, Arizona. Persons interested in attending the meeting should contact the NBEC office. The January meeting will not include an examination review session, as has been the case in previous years. The final review of NAVLE forms will take place in April from now on.

1999 NAVLE Item Writers

The NBEC thanks the following individuals for serving as NAVLE item writers in 1999: Drs. Christopher Brown, Ames, IA; Ben Darien, Madison, WI; Sherrill Davison, Philadelphia, PA; Cheryl Dhein, Pullman, WA; Tom Fangman, Columbia, MO; Theresa Fossum, College Station, TX; Gary Gackstetter, Bethesda, MD; Ken Harkin, Manhattan, KS; Al Hopkins, Dallas, TX; James Johnson, College Station, TX; Michelle Kopcha, East Lansing, MI; David Panciera, Blacksburg, VA; Jeanne Pittari, Houston, TX; Owen Rae, Gainesville, FL; Claude Ragle, Pullman, WA; David Reeves, Athens, GA; Ilona Rodan, Madison, WI; David Rosen, Kalamazoo, MI; Stan Rubin, Saskatoon, SK; Margie Sherk, Vancouver, BC; James Thorne, Columbia, MO; Loren Warnick, Ithaca, NY; Frank Welcome, Cherry Valley, NY; Ame Walesby, Ames, IA; Collette Wheler, Saskatoon, SK; and Alice Wolf, College Station, TX.

The list does not include individuals who wrote NAVLE items in 1999 for the Professional Examination Service under the direction of Drs. Susan McDonough and Ken Meyer.

NAVLE item writers are selected by the 10 members of the NBEC's Examination Development Subcommittee. EDS members (Drs. Dhein, Rubin, Wolf, Rosen, Thorne, Welcome, Brown, Ragle, Reeves, and Gackstetter; all of whom served as item writers this year) are content experts representing the various species areas covered on the NAVLE.

From the Past: History of the NBEC

Number 14 in a Series

These days, we tend to take computers for granted. Of course, that has not always been the case. The National Board Examination (NBE) was first administered in 1954. One of the advantages of the multiple choice format of the NBE was that the answer sheets could be scored by an optical scanner and the results entered into a computer. However, it would be a long time before computers were routinely used in the item development and item banking process.

NBE items used to be typed on note cards. The item bank, then, consisted of thousands of individual cards, sorted into various content categories. These cards were used to select items to assemble draft examinations.

A 1976 report from a special steering committee of the National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (NBVME, the predecessor to the NBEC), identified several problems with the NBE item bank, which may be attributed to the way the item bank was managed in those days. The report also noted "outdated items in the PES examination pool," and asked PES to have its consultant, Dr. Stan Hendricks, review items in the bank (one card at a time, presumably) for duplication.

At the January 1978 meeting of the NBVME's Executive Committee, Dr. Craig Schoon of PES reported that "computerization of the item pool has been accomplished." He also noted that

the most effective use of the new computerized item bank would have to await the approval of a revised item classification system and a new test blueprint.

The revised classification system, developed by Dr. B.E. Hooper (*National Board Report*, May 1999), included three dimensions: animal species, organ system, and discipline.

At the January 1979 meeting of the NBVME's Executive Committee, Dr. Schoon reported that computer work would be completed before July 1979. The June 1980 NBE was the first examination to be computer-generated. It would be well into the 1980's, however, before the NBEC's minutes were prepared using word processing!

As a point of reference, when the item bank was transferred from the Professional Examination Service (PES) to the National Board of Medical Examiners last year, the entire bank (over 15,000 items) fit onto one Zip disk.



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

R.B. Baker, DVM, *Chair*; Nancy L. Collins, DVM, *Chair-Elect*; Norman LaFauce, DVM, DACT, *Secretary-Treasurer*; Michael G. Groves, DVM, PhD, DACVM, *Past Chair*; Catherine Cross, DVM, DABVP; James Dalley, DVM, MS; Donald D. Draper, DVM, PhD, MBA; Richard S. Hawe, DVM, DABVP; Al Hopkins, DVM; Jenna Jones, *Public Member*; Jan Krehbiel, DVM, PhD, DACVP; Roger A. Magnusson, DVM, DABVP; David Sandals, DVM, MSc. John R. Boyce, DVM, PhD, *Executive Director*



NBEC members at the meeting in New Orleans on July 13. Front row, l to r: Roger Magnusson, Jenna Jones, James Brace, Michael Groves, R.B. Baker, and Norman LaFaunce. Back row: Dean Frey, Al Hopkins, Don Draper, Nancy Collins, Richard Hawe, David Sandals, John Boyce. Not pictured: Catherine Cross. For 1999-2000, Drs. James Dalley and Jan Krehbiel replaced Drs. Frey and Brace, respectively.

NBEC Member Profile: Dr. James Dalley

Dr. James Dalley, one of the four members of the NBEC appointed by the American Association of Veterinary State Boards (AAVSB), describes himself as an “all Michigan guy.” [*not a bad thing at all - ed.*] A native of Wyandotte, a downriver suburb of Detroit, Dr. Dalley earned DVM and MS degrees from Michigan State University. He credits his college roommate with directing his interests from soil science to veterinary medicine.

After graduation, Dr. Dalley joined the faculty at Michigan State as a large animal medicine and surgery clinician. Later, he moved to small animal medicine, focusing on dermatology and general small animal medicine. Dr. Dalley served the College of Veterinary Medicine in that capacity for 29 years, retiring earlier this year after a total of 39 years on the faculty.

In 1987, Dr. Dalley was appointed to the Michigan State Board of Veterinary Medicine, and he served as a member of the board until 1996. Through his work with the licensing board, he became involved in the AAVSB, serving as the organization’s President from 1997-99. He was appointed to the NBEC this past July.

Dr. Dalley has three daughters, two living in East Lansing and one in Portland, Oregon, the latter having two sons. In his spare time, and especially since retirement, Dr. Dalley enjoys spending time at his cottage “up north” in Michigan. There, he likes boating, cutting wood, hiking, and working on the cottage.

Dr. Dalley looks forward to helping “to make the NAVLE a superb exam,” and hopes to be able to see the Clinical Proficiency Examination come under the NBEC umbrella.



NAVLE Introduces New Approach to Application Process

The NAVLE application process will offer candidates more flexibility than is now available with the NBE and CCT.

Presently, all licensing boards require candidates to pass the NBE and CCT. However, not all boards administer the licensing examinations themselves. This can create an extra step for candidates seeking licensure in those jurisdictions.

To illustrate how things will be different, let's use a hypothetical veterinary student, Julie Jones. Ms. Jones is a senior student at the University of Tennessee, but is originally from New Jersey. She wants to return to New Jersey to practice and does not want a license in Tennessee.

Presently, Ms. Jones would probably take the NBE and CCT in Tennessee, because New Jersey is one of those states that does not administer the examinations. Her

initial score report would be sent to the Tennessee board, because that is where she took the exams, even though she does not want a license in Tennessee. To have her scores reported to New Jersey, she would use the services of the AAVSB's Veterinary Information Verifying Agency (VIVA), which would issue a score report to New Jersey on her behalf, for an additional charge.

With the NAVLE, Ms. Jones can apply directly to New Jersey for a license to practice, avoiding Tennessee entirely. After reviewing her application, the New Jersey board will forward her name to the NBEC office on a list of eligible candidates. When she takes the NAVLE, her score report will be sent directly to the New Jersey Board, thus simplifying the process.

This case also illustrates another feature of the NAVLE program. Once she receives her scheduling permit from the National

Board of Medical Examiners, Ms. Jones will be able to make an appointment to take the NAVLE at any Sylvan Prometric testing center in North America, subject only to availability of space at that location on that date. She can take the NAVLE at the Sylvan center in Knoxville, at a Sylvan center in New Jersey while she is home on Thanksgiving vacation, or at one of the Sylvan centers in New York while she is there on an externship.

Because licensing boards will not be involved in the administration of the NAVLE, boards in those jurisdictions that now give the NBE and CCT may see a slight decrease in the number of candidates applying for the examination through that jurisdiction, because candidates will be able to apply directly to the board where they want their initial license to practice.

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