

Cytopathology in focus: ABPath CertLink pilot open to all

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January 2019—The American Board of Pathology subspecialty certification examination in cytopathology is given each fall at the ABPath office in Tampa, Fla. Cytopathology has the largest number of examinees of the 11 pathology subspecialty examinations. There were 142 candidates in 2017, and overall 98 percent passed the examination. Ninety-eight percent of the first-time test takers and 92 percent of the repeating candidates passed. In 2018, there were 145 candidates and 98 percent passed the examination: 99 percent of the first-time test takers and 50 percent of the repeating candidates.

Hematopathology had the second highest number of subspecialty candidates in 2017, and the overall pass rate was also 98 percent.

ABPath is committed to professional development through its Continuing Certification (CC) Program (formerly known as Maintenance of Certification, or MOC). To improve diplomates' CC part III experience, the ABPath has been working to make CC more relevant to diplomates, with a new emphasis on more frequent longitudinal assessment to improve retention of knowledge. The ABPath CertLink pilot was developed through a partnership with the American Board of Medical Specialties and launched in July 2018. Participation is now open to all ABPath diplomates. The cost of participating in ABPath CertLink is included in a diplomate's two-year CC reporting fees, and enrollment is at no cost for non-time-limited diplomates for the duration of the pilot. If the pilot is successful, ABPath intends to offer ABPath CertLink as an alternative to the current 10-year Continuing Certification examination.

More than 60 percent of time-limited board-certified pathologists have already signed up for the ABPath CertLink pilot. Every three months participants answer 15 new questions online, plus questions that are a repetition of topics previously answered incorrectly. They have five minutes to answer each question, can use any resource except another person, and receive immediate feedback on their answer. The participants then receive a brief educational paragraph on the topic as well as references. A pathologist's question bank consists of a percentage of core questions from their areas of primary certification and can be used to customize elective practice (content) areas.

While some subspecialty practice areas are still being populated with additional items, limiting the percentage that can be chosen, sufficient cytopathology questions are available. ABPath is crowdsourcing for items from pathologists; we encourage pathologists to be active in submitting questions. Interested pathologists should contact the board's ABPath CertLink coordinator at pathcertlink@abpath.org.

A soft launch of ABPath CertLink with limited numbers of volunteers took place from October 2017 through January 2018. Volunteers answered 10 questions per month. Feedback from those who participated was positive and was used to shape the next iteration of the platform for the hard launch.

To help ABPath fulfill its mission to serve the public and advance the profession of pathology by promoting lifelong competency of pathologists, please consider enrolling in the ABPath CertLink for the remainder of the pilot program. To register or for more information, visit www.abpath.org.

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Cytopathology Committee and a member of the American Board of Pathology cytopathology test development advisory committee. Woodworth is communications specialist, American Board of Pathology.