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December 10, 2018

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In our memo to you dated Nov. 19, 2018, we indicated that the ABR would take certain steps to address various issues raised by your respective membership with regard to the ABR qualifying exams in radiation oncology. We would like to provide an update on those commitments:

- **Development of core curricula for Physics and Cancer and Radiation Biology:** At this time, ASTRO has convened two working groups, with stakeholder representation, to update the physics curriculum and develop a cancer and radiation biology curriculum. The ABR is participating in that process and we understand that a targeted completion date for both work products is Feb. 2019. We anticipate that once completed, the curricula will be used to inform blueprint development of the ABR basic science qualifying exams.
- **Improvement in the ABR basic science study guides:** When the curriculum development process noted above is completed, we anticipate that the work product will essentially become the foundation of the ABR study guides, and links to the ASTRO work product will be placed on the ABR website. Both the curricula and study guides will provide greater granularity of subject material. We are also committed to providing the actual reference sources used for item development as part of the revised study guides.

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- **Timing of administration of the 2019 Physics and Cancer and Radiation Biology and Clinical Oncology qualifying exams:** As we indicated previously, the PearsonVUE test centers are only available on certain dates, and they are not inclined to be flexible for the ABR, although we have approached them with regard to a date change that would separate the exams. They have declined to make any changes, and the ABR test center in Tucson cannot currently accommodate the needs of radiation oncology exam administration. With this level of advance notice, we have been able to change the scheduling of the 2020 exams.

2019: Physics and Cancer and Radiation Biology	July 11
Clinical radiation oncology	July 12
2020: Physics and Cancer and Radiation Biology	July 9
Clinical radiation oncology	July 24

We have initiated discussions with PearsonVUE regarding scheduling of the 2021 exams and we believe that we will be able to provide a 4 week separation between the basic science and clinical exam administrations at that time.

- **Development of greater granularity of basic science categories to optimize ability of candidates to understand their strengths and weaknesses:** We believe that the curricula and subsequent revised study guides will provide greater granularity for candidate exam preparation, and beginning in 2019, we will report candidate performance based on the revised major categories in the study guides.
- **Analysis of candidate performance on old versus new basic science items:** We have carefully analyzed candidate performance on the 2017 and 2018 basic science exams with regard to “used” versus “unused” (i.e. new) items. Statistics regarding past performance are not available for “unused” items, but we can make some definitive observations from available data:
 - Candidate performance on individual items from 2017 and 2018 was psychometrically valid and reproducible
 - Candidate performance on “used” versus “unused” items was psychometrically valid and reproducible, and in several instances, performance of failed candidates was actually better on the 2018 exam than the 2017 administration
 - Categories in which candidates demonstrated lower performance had demonstrably lower Angoff scores, indicating that lower performance was anticipated and accounted for on those items
 - On the 9 categories evaluated (4 cancer and radiation biology and 5 physics) the ratio of “used” versus “unused” items was similar in the two years
 - A more granular evaluation of candidate performance on the exams is not possible because of the limited number of items in each of the sub-categories

Please contact us if you have additional questions. We look forward to continuation of a productive and collegial dialogue.

Sincerely,

Brent J. Wagner, MD
President, ABR Board of Governors

Lisa A Kachnic, MD
Immediate Past President, ABR Board of Governors

cc. Valerie P. Jackson, MD, ABR
Laura Thevenot, BS, ASTRO