Preparing for the Oral Clinical Examination (OCE)

Congratulations! You have passed the Qualifying Examination and have registered for the Oral Clinical Examination. To help you navigate the process, we thought you may be interested in responses to frequently asked questions about the OCE and some tips for preparing and taking the examination.

A frequent question received by the ABPD headquarters staff is, “How can I prepare for the board exam?”

There is not a “one plan fits all” approach. Here are some tips that you can follow to successfully complete the challenging, yet rewarding, second part of the board certification process.

1. Review the ABPD website (www.abpd.org) soon after registering for the OCE
   a. OCE Overview
   b. Watch the OCE Video. This is an excellent representation of the format of the examination.

2. Understanding the purpose of the OCE and how the examination is structured:
   a. The exam is designed to evaluate your knowledge and ability to solve clinical cases in pediatric dentistry.
   b. OCE is administered in Dallas, at a facility designed for administration of professional specialty board oral examinations.
   c. Each exam is comprised of clinical vignettes or scenarios from eight (8) domains or categories. As a candidate, you will receive vignettes from all categories.
   d. For each vignette, you will be presented background information about patients and their situations. Many, but not all, vignettes will include images shown on a monitor. Examiners will ask open-ended questions to assess your knowledge and skills.
      ➢ Comprehensive Care
      ➢ Hospital Dentistry
      ➢ Behavior Guidance
      ➢ Management of the Developing Occlusion
      ➢ Oral Pathology
      ➢ Prevention
      ➢ Special Health Care Needs
      ➢ Trauma
   e. Exams consist of two one-hour sessions. The first hour, two examiners will talk with you regarding four of the domains. The second hour, two different examiners will address the remaining four domains.
3. Preparing for the oral examination:
   a. Be systematic. Set aside time for study and reflection on a regular basis.
   b. Realize that you will be expected to have knowledge about all eight domains. If there is an area you are less familiar with, spend more time on that area.
   c. Talk with your colleagues regarding how they prepared.
   d. Develop study teams or use a mentor or study partner to practice.
   e. Use flashcards.

4. Resources/References
   b. Read the Handbook of Pediatric Dentistry, AAPD, 2011.
   c. Attend the AAPD Comprehensive Review Course or take the DVD version.
   d. Attend the AAPD OCE Preparation Course.
   e. Listen to CD-ROMs of Continuing Education course of the Practical Reviews in Pediatric Dentistry series.
   f. Review recent studies, clinical reports and articles.
   g. Review textbooks.

5. Taking the Examination:
   a. Use a systematic approach for each vignette.
   b. Try to think of this as several new patients who you are evaluating for the first time in your practice.
   c. Be confident, just as you would be when having discussions with parents or other medical professionals.
   d. Remember: if you don’t say it, it didn’t happen.