

The American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine Announces Significant Changes for the 2016 Exam and Case Presentation

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The directors of the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine (ABDSM) have announced substantial changes to the Diplomate exam and case presentation that will make becoming a Diplomate more accessible and convenient. The ABDSM has transitioned to a computer-based exam, extended the timelines in the application process, broadened requirements for case studies and shortened the suggested reading list.

As dental sleep medicine has gained increasing recognition from the medical community, I have seen ABDSM certification grow in importance and demand, with 60 candidates sitting for and passing the 2015 board exam in Seattle. The ABDSM exam and case presentation certifies a thorough knowledge in dental sleep medicine, and I believe the significant changes for the 2016 exam and case presentation process create a path to certification that is more accessible and more convenient for those interested in growing their dental sleep medicine practice.

A Worthy Investment

Established in 2004, the ABDSM is an independent, nonprofit, self-designated board that certifies licensed dentists who treat sleep-related breathing disorders. Earning certification, or "Diplomate status," by the ABDSM allows dentists to demonstrate their proficiency in dental sleep medicine to patients, physicians and insurers. Diplomate status is more than just an opportunity to distinguish yourself and prove your expertise in the field of dental sleep medicine. A Diplomate of the ABDSM meets a quality benchmark of care that is nationally recognized not only by the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine (AADSM) but also recognized and supported by the physicians of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM).

Significant Changes in 2016

The changes to the Certification Guidelines were implemented to improve the quality of the test itself, while also creating a better experience for applicants. The changes below are grouped into three main categories: convenient locations, expanded timelines and adjusted requirements.

Convenient Locations

Starting in 2016, the ABDSM exam will no longer be given in conjunction with the AADSM annual meeting. Instead, the exam will be computer based and available at hundreds of testing centers across the U.S. and Canada. This change offers convenience and cost-savings to dentists interested in sitting for the exam. Applicants will now have the flexibility of using Kryterion Global Testing Solutions to choose a testing center near their home and selecting a convenient exam date and time during the two-week testing window of April 10-23, 2016. The

proctored, 200-question exam will still be a mix of multiple choice and true or false questions with an allocated time of four hours.

Extended Timelines

New extended dates provide candidates more time to complete case studies, which can be submitted after sitting for the exam. The application process will start in the fall each year and is open this year from Oct. 1 to Nov. 16, 2015. Once the application is submitted, applicants will have an extended period of 18 months to submit their 15 case studies. In addition, to help applicants achieve the required 50 continuing education (CE) hours within three years prior to applying, candidates are allowed to submit up to 15 approved CE credits after the application deadline. Applicants for the 2016 exam have until March 1, 2016 to submit these 15 CE credits.

Adjusted Requirements

Revisions also have been made to improve the quality of the ABDSM Board Exam and provide flexibility for dentists when collecting required data from physician partners.

- **Acceptance of RDI Measurements:** Case studies can now use either the apnea/hypopnea index (AHI) or respiratory disturbance index (RDI) to quantify sleep apnea severity, as long as the same measure is used for both pre- and post-treatment sleep studies.
- **Unlimited Sleep Center Options:** The new Certification Guidelines now allow dentists to work with any sleep center to fulfill Diplomate requirements. This offers dentists more opportunities to collaborate with any sleep center.
- **Condensed Recommended Reading List:** The recommended reading list has been shortened considerably to approximately 50 of the most recent and relevant articles, the vast majority of which will be made available to those who take the AADSM's Board Review Course.

Starting the Journey to Diplomate Status

All journeys start with a single step. Being a Diplomate of the ABDSM distinguishes you as a professional in the rapidly growing and rewarding field of dental sleep medicine. I encourage you to take your first step by learning about the certification process. Being aware of the nuances required can help you reach this prestigious designation smoothly. You can begin by treating each patient as a potential board case, and each CE hour as an investment in your knowledge of dental sleep medicine (see tips in Figure 1). Once you have started down the path, you will quickly find that you have accumulated

Figure 1**Board Case Requirement Tips**

- The five detailed case studies will require multiple *pretreatment* intraoral photographs showing the patient's dentition using lip and cheek retractors. Taking these photographs for each patient who has a pre-treatment AHI or RDI of 10 or greater will increase your options when selecting cases for submission.
- The detailed case studies require documentation of at least three follow-up appointments, the third appointment being at least three months post oral appliance insertion. Continue to document follow-up visits by taking thorough SOAP notes in the patient record so you only have to make copies of these notes for cases that qualify as a detailed case.
- Templates and other resources developed to assist you in putting together your application can be found on abdsm.org.
- Diagnostic sleep studies for all 15 board cases must have been conducted no more than five years prior to when the oral appliance was delivered.

Tips for Earning CE Hours

- 50 ADA CERP recognized or AGD PACE approved continuing education hours are required to sit for the exam, and 35 need to be earned before applying.
- Of the 50 required CE credits, up to 10 hours may be AMA PRA Category 1 Credits in sleep medicine.
- The AADSM has many ongoing education offerings to help fulfill this requirement. There are two opportunities in particular that I recommend to potential applicants: the AADSM Annual Meeting and the Board Review Course. Combined, these two events enable you to earn more than half the needed hours in just a few days.
- All 50 CE hours must further your clinical knowledge in dental sleep medicine. CE credits from practice management or billing courses, for example, don't help improve your understanding of dental sleep medicine and will not be accepted.

both the knowledge and the experience you need to sit for the ABDSM Board Exam and present your cases.

Diplomate certification has the power to help build a firm foundation for the ongoing success of your dental sleep medicine practice, and it also plays an important role in building the reputation of dental sleep medicine nationwide. I encourage anyone who is considering applying this fall for the 2016 exam, or for future examinations, to review the detailed Certification Guidelines posted on the ABDSM website. I hope that the changes made this year will help ease the path of your dental sleep medicine journey and provide you with the extra encouragement needed to submit an application and embark on the road toward Diplomate status.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Dr. Addy has indicated no financial conflicts of interest.