

NOTE FROM THE AMERICAN BOARD OF DERMATOLOGY
REGARDING EXAMINATION SECURITY

You may have seen the CNN reports which aired January 13 and February 2 regarding the use of “recall notes” by radiology residents and “airplane notes” by dermatology residents.

The American Board of Dermatology has always been opposed to the use of its copyrighted test material, and has openly discussed its opposition to this practice (“airplane notes”) in the *ABD Resident Newsletter* and at the Residents in Transition Forum held at the annual American Academy of Dermatology meeting.

Over the years the Board has taken the following actions to decrease the potential for cheating:

1. The certifying and recertifying examinations are all administered on computers at professional testing centers. The in-training examination is administered online and is proctored by faculty and staff at the residency programs.
2. The number of used or equating questions on the certifying examination has been reduced to ~25% (see box below).
3. The order of the items on the certifying and recertifying examinations differs from person to person (scrambling).
4. The number of image-associated questions has been increased (currently over 70% for the certifying examination and 100% for the general module of the recertifying examination).
5. All applicants are required to sign an honor code attestation at the time of the examination application and again on the day of the examination (see below). Before the certifying examination is administered the proctor reads an honor code statement.
6. Questions used on the in-training examination are removed from the pool of questions available for use on the certifying examination.

Why are used questions necessary?

- They permit comparison of the degree of difficulty of examinations from year to year despite variability in test questions and candidate pool ability, therefore ensuring the statistical reliability of each examination.
- They permit the evaluation of new questions to make sure they perform well in discriminating the high performers from the low performers among the test users.



Official ABD Honor Code Statement for the Certifying Examination

The American Board of Dermatology (ABD) wishes to keep all test questions confidential so they will not become available to future examinees. Accordingly, it is requested that each examinee sign the following Honor Code Statement:

I agree not to retain the certifying examination of the American Board of Dermatology in any format, not to furnish any questions to any entity, and not to discuss the questions or answers with anyone other than the physicians who have taken this examination with me. I further understand that this examination is a copyrighted work of the ABD and that reproducing any of the questions in any format constitutes infringement of the ABD's copyright. Any candidate found to have distributed the questions in any manner may have his/her examination results invalidated and may be barred from retaking the examination in the future for a period determined by the Board in its sole discretion.

2/6/12