From the Editor

The American Board of Radiology Examination Production: Past, Present, and Future
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The ABR produces a vast amount of examination content each year. Although the diagnostic radiology oral exam was administered for the last time in 2014, the ABR continues to administer a wide variety of exams for the diagnostic radiology, radiation oncology, and medical physics disciplines. In 2014, the ABR was responsible for the production of more than 200 individual examinations that were administered to more than 5,000 first-time examinees. These initial certification and Maintenance of Certification (MOC) exams spanned from the evaluation of basic knowledge to more advanced case-based and image-rich clinical management evaluation.

The exams also included a variety of different formats, from single-best-answer, multiple-choice items administered in standardized exam centers, to case-based oral examinations administered in Louisville, Kentucky, by trained oral examiners (in radiation oncology, medical physics, and interventional radiology). For additional information on exam performance, please refer to the “Scoring and Results” section of a particular exam on the ABR website at www.theabr.org (links can be found under the “Exam Information” sidebars on the Web pages for each discipline).

This enormous quantity of exams is due in part to an effort made by the ABR to increase convenience for ABR examinees. For example, many exams are now administered more than once per year, necessitating the creation of multiple exams within the same discipline or content area. These additional exams are needed to ensure that items exposed in one administration do not have to be used in a second administration within the same year, as well as to give candidates multiple opportunities to take a given exam.

In addition, some exams allow examinees to self-select content for better alignment with their particular practice profile. While this self-selection process is advantageous to examinees, it also necessitates that additional exams be created. These exams may or may not be
administered in a given year, depending on how often a particular exam area is selected by examinees. Currently, it is somewhat challenging to predict which exams will be selected more frequently in a self-selection exam scenario. Therefore, multiple exams are created in each exam area to accommodate examinees and avoid the potential problem of overexposure of content.

To produce the massive amount of content each year, the ABR enlists the help of more than 450 volunteers from the diagnostic radiology, radiation oncology, and medical physics communities. These content experts dedicate their precious time and knowledge each year to generate the necessary material for all ABR exams. The volunteer group is carefully chosen based on their experience within a given specialty or subspecialty area. They are highly regarded individuals who come from many different practice environments all over the United States. We are greatly in debt to these volunteers, as the ABR examination process would not be possible without them. New ABR volunteers, as well as ABR trustees (who are also volunteers), are required to participate in the MOC program. This rigorous volunteer selection process helps ensure that the content on the exams is both reliable and valid. Please visit the ABR website at http://www.theabr.org/volunteers for additional information regarding ABR volunteer opportunities.

As the ABR heads into 2015, exam production efforts are predicted to increase even further. Final preparations are currently being made for the first administrations of the new diagnostic radiology Certifying Exam, as well as the first radiation oncology MOC practice-profiled exam. Preparations are also under way for the new Interventional Radiology/Diagnostic Radiology (IR/DR) certification pathway. We anticipate that volunteers will begin to create content for the IR/DR exams in the near future. For more information on the new IR/DR certification, go to www.theabr.org/ic-irdr-landing.

For more information regarding all upcoming exams, please visit the ABR website at www.theabr.org.