

Stand-Alone TMOD Examination to be Phased Out

The stand-alone version of the TMOD examination will be administered for the last time in 2009. A TMOD breakout score will still be reported within the restructured Part II examination, however.

The phase-out of the stand-alone TMOD test is a significant milestone for Optometry, as was the test's implementation. When this test was administered for the first time in 1985, only five states allowed optometrists to use drugs for therapeutic patient care purposes. Only 72 candidates nationwide sat for the initial administration and within the graduating Class of 1985, only 49 students participated.

With few individuals seeking TMOD certification, the test was administered only once per year during its initial two years. However, practice statutes began to expand rapidly, and demand for the test grew exponentially, particularly among already licensed practitioners. In 1987, more than 1,000 candidates sat for the test, and by 1991, the National Board had to administer the test at least three times per year in order to be responsive to state board and association requests on behalf of their practitioners.

This era also marked a threshold in which the majority of states allowed therapeutics. In 1993, the TMOD content was absorbed within the National Board Part II – Clinical Science examination, which expanded from two to three testing sessions to accommodate this additional material. By the next year, the overwhelming majority of students earned their TMOD certification from their Part II TMOD breakout score, rather than from the stand-alone version of TMOD.

The stand-alone version of TMOD has continued to be administered. However, as Optometry evolved to all states allowing therapeutic use of drugs, demand waned for the stand-alone version of the test among practitioners, as relatively few experienced optometrists lacked TMOD certification. Accordingly, the TMOD test was reduced to two administrations in 2001, and further reduced to one administration in 2007. Only 128 total candidates, 46 of whom were experienced practitioners, sat for the single TMOD administration in 2007. The population size was not much different than it was when the test was administered for the first time in 1985.

The restructured, expanded PAM examination will replace Clinical Science as Part II, beginning with the December 2009 administration. The National Board will continue providing a TMOD breakout score from Part II. However, since PAM has a different format than Clinical Science – specifically case-based – the current and future TMOD breakout scores will not be equivalent. For this reason, and with evidence of little practitioner demand, the stand-alone version of TMOD will be phased out. The remaining administrations would have been in April 2008 and April 2009. However, a third – and last – administration of the stand-alone version will be added in August 2009.

Beginning in 2010, any candidates who need to sit for the TMOD test will be required to sit for the full 1-day administration of Part II – PAM. However, since many of the test items within PAM will not contribute to the breakout TMOD score, candidates will be permitted to declare themselves as *TMOD-only* candidates when applying for the test. This candidate status will result in a reduced fee and a reporting of *only* the TMOD score. More information regarding this change will be available on the National Board website as the examination restructure progresses, along with 1-2 sample cases.

Optometry has been enhanced significantly by the expanded scope of practice statutes that, coupled with passing the TMOD examination, enabled clinicians to provide broader care for their patients. The ultimate beneficiary of the TMOD assessment was the public. Phasing-out the stand-alone TMOD examination in 2009 will complete a 25-year program. The National Board is proud of its role in serving both the profession and the public during this era of growth.