

I've got a little secret. I never studied pain pathways. Not once. Not in school, although it appeared on four separate exams, and not for boards. You know why? It simply wasn't worth it. On each of the four exams on which it appeared in school, it was only a small portion of the entire exam, yet, for me, represented an enormous amount of study time to comprehend it fully. In fact, on each exam, it only comprised 1-2 questions of the entire 100 question exam. So, I figured I would just skip it. I would take my best guess on those 1 or 2 questions and spend the rest of my limited time studying material that composed a larger portion of the test. When it came time to take boards, I followed the same theory. I simply skipped it. I knew it was unlikely that I would even see a question on pain pathways on my boards so I spent my time covering higher yield material. And you know what? It wasn't on my boards.

So, why am I telling you this? Because most students allot themselves about 30 days to cram for boards after they graduate. That seems like a lot of time until you pull out all of your notes and textbooks and realize how much material you've covered in the past couple of years. All of a sudden, thirty days seems like the briefest of moments to accomplish it all. It's at this point, that you have to decide exactly how to spend your precious time. What should you study first? What should you focus on the most?

The answers to these questions are different for every student, but the approach to answering the question is the same for all. You should study the material that yields the highest chances of providing you with the information you need to answer the greatest number of questions correctly. Sounds obvious, doesn't it? But, did you know that you were 60 times more likely to have a question on conscious sedation than one regarding tracheotomy? If you only had twenty minutes left before the test, which one would you study? Did you know that only one in 13 students will receive a question on cardiomyopathy, but that every single student will get at least one question on legal issues?

Knowing the odds of getting a question from category or another doesn't mean you won't get one of the less common questions. Remember, statistics only apply to populations and NEVER apply to an individual. But, when time gets short, you have to decide what to study based on something, and choosing what is statistically the most probable is consistently the most effective method.

The table below summarizes the chances that each topic will appear on an exam. For example, the category entitled Monitored anesthesia care/conscious sedation has a 100% chance of appearing on the exam, meaning that in a standard 100 question board exam, you most likely WILL see a question in this category. In contrast, even though 5 questions on your exam will be related to surgical procedures, a specific surgical procedure such as cystoscopy, has only a 5% chance of appearing on your exam.

Ideally, you should plan your studying far enough in advance to adequately cover each topic thoroughly. All too often, however, we live somewhere below the ideal standard and must cope with the situation as best we can. This guide is not an absolute answer to what will appear on your exam, but is meant to illuminate what is MOST LIKELY to appear on your exam. Time is always limited. Use it wisely!

<b>Category</b>	<b>Odds of Getting a Question in this Category</b>
Preoperative assessment and preparation of patient	100%
Monitored anesthesia care/conscious sedation	100%
Postanesthesia care/respiratory therapy	100%
Geriatrics	100%
Obesity	100%
Chronic pain management	100%
Pediatrics	100%
Legal issues	100%
Research and quality improvement	100%
Professional practice standards	100%
Patient safety	100%
Interpretation of Data (labs, diagnostics, and intraoperative monitoring)	100%
Fluid/Blood Replacement	75%
Airway Management	75%
Postoperative pain management	75%
Aqueous solutions and concentrations	69%
Acids, bases, and salts	69%
Hepatic metabolism	69%
Cellular mechanisms for action	69%
Drug receptor interaction	69%
Units of measurement	69%
Gases and gas laws	69%
Solubility, diffusion, and osmosis	69%
Pressure and fluid flow	69%
Electricity and electrical safety	69%
Vaporization and humidification	69%
Measurement of O <sub>2</sub> , CO <sub>2</sub> , and H ions	69%
Obstetric anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology	45%
Obstetric pharmacology	45%
Caesarean section	45%
Vaginal delivery	45%
Labor epidurals	45%
Intrathecal	45%
Postpartum and tubal ligation	45%
Vaginal birth after caesarean section	45%
High risk obstetrics	45%
Non-obstetric surgery in the parturient	45%
Management of obstetric complications	45%

Positioning techniques (note: there is a 38% chance of receiving a question in EACH position category (prone, supine, lithotomy, lateral, sitting, beach chair, trendelenburg, and reverse trendelenburg)	38%
Anesthetic delivery systems (note: there is a 25% chance of receiving a question in EACH category in this section including: high/low pressure gase sources, regulators/manifolds, flowmeters, vaporizers, proportioning systems, pressure safety devices, fail-safe devices, ventilator, CO2 absorbent, rebreathing, non-rebreathing, and circle circuits, and alarm devices)	25%
Airway Devices (there is a 19% chance that EACH airway device will appear on the exam including: LMAs, bronchoscopes, oral and nasal airways, jet ventilation, retrograde wire, combitube, Cook exchange catheter, etc.)	19%
Local/Regional Anesthesia (there is a 19% chance that EACH technique will appear on the exam including infiltration, topical, subarachnoid, epidural, retrobulbar blocks, combined spinal/epidural, airway blocks, and each of the extremity blocks)	19%
Monitoring Devices (there is a 13% chance that each of the monitoring devices will appear on the exam including everything from temperature and peripheral nerve stimulators to arterial waveforms and urinary output)	13%
Pharmacology (there is an 8% chance that each of the 99 drugs listed in the CCNA Handbook will appear on the exam. For the complete list, view the CCNA handbook)	8%
Anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology (there is a 7% chance that each of the 111 disease processes listed in the CCNA Handbook will appear on the exam. For the complete list, view the CCNA handbook)	7%
Surgical procedures and procedures related to organ systems (there is a 5% chance that each of the disease processes listed in the CCNA Handbook will appear on the exam. For the complete list, view the CCNA handbook)	5%