



Spotlight On Aatif M. Husain, MD, Durham, NC

Dr. Husain is Professor, Department of Neurology, and Chief of the Division of Epilepsy, Sleep and Clinical Neurophysiology at Duke University Medical Center, Durham, NC.

Why did you want to join an ABPN committee?

It is an honor to be asked to serve on an ABPN committee. The ABPN serves an incredibly important function by assessing competence of neurologists and psychiatrists. The instruments used for these assessments are developed by various committees. Members of these committees serve an important function by developing the assessment tools and ensuring that they are measuring what is important for practicing clinicians.

As a clinical neurologist with an active practice and interest in neurologic education, I am excited to be able to contribute my perspectives about what is important for competency evaluations. It has also been enlightening to learn from so many other committee members, each one bringing a slightly different perspective.

Can you describe some of your responsibilities and duties while serving on the ABPN committee?

I am currently serving as the Vice Chair of the Clinical Neurophysiology Article-Based Continuing Certification (ABCC) committee. This committee is charged with identifying contemporary articles that can be used in this assessment, and then writing questions that test the concepts presented in the articles. Additionally, as Vice Chair, I assist the Chair in various administrative aspects of the committee, such as ensuring that the final assessment instrument does not have repeat or ambiguous test items.

What should people know about ABPN committees and how committee work relates to the Board?

One of the most striking features of the board and its committees is how well organized the test development process is. There is a lot of emphasis on ensuring that only relevant questions are asked and that the questions are asked in the most direct and unambiguous way possible. Moreover, while each question is created by subject matter experts, the questions are also vetted by professional test editors to ensure that what reaches the examinee is a thoroughly vetted product. Before joining the ABPN committee, I did not realize how much effort was put into this process. The number of meetings needed to create one exam and the number of iterations each exam goes through before it is finalized has been eye opening.



Why is the patient perspective important to you and how does that guide your work on the committee?

As physicians and health care professionals, improving the lives of our patients is the core of our mission. Each patient has a core set of values that have been shaped by their life experiences. It is through these life experiences that they, and all of us, see and understand their treatment options. Only after understanding these core values, are we able to deliver effective medical care. Thus, understanding these core values is of critical importance. At the ABPN Board and committee level, we must consider these core values as we create assessment tools and ensure that these tools consider the wide variations in patient perspectives.

Did you have a mentor that affected your career journey?

I have been very fortunate to have had many mentors that positively impacted my career. As a resident in Neurology, I was greatly encouraged and supported by my chair at the time, Dr. Rosalie Burns. She was a pioneer of her time and one of the first women to chair a Neurology department. She was a member of the ABPN board when I was a resident in the early 1990s. Dr. Burns first invited me to contribute to the ABPN as a member of her oral examination team (during the era of Part II, “oral board exams”). Later in my career, another ABPN Board member, Dr. Janice Massey, who was my fellowship program director and became a faculty colleague, was incredibly generous with her time and support. She also provided me many opportunities to participate in Board activities. These are just two people associated with the ABPN that have strongly impacted my career. There are many other mentors and colleagues without whom no success would have been possible for me. I am eternally grateful to them.

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