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CBIC Certification Exam: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the SARE?

The SARE has recently been re-named the Self Achievement Certification Exam (previously the Self Assessment Certification Exam). It is an open-book, take-home exam geared only to re-certifiers. As of 2007, the SARE is no longer available for self-assessment purposes thus the new name to Self Achievement Recertification Exam. The questions are based on a minimum of 7 years of infection control professional (ICP) practice. 2008 is the last year the SARE is available as a hardcopy booklet; in 2009, the SARE will be available only as a computer-based exam, but still designed for the candidate to complete at his or her own pace within the calendar year that the candidate is due to re-certify.

What are the differences between the Computer Based Test (CBT) and the Self Achievement Recertification Exam (SARE)?

The CBT certification exam is based on a minimum of 2 years of infection control practice in a patient care setting. The exam consists of 150 multiple choice questions of which 135 are scored (15 are pretest questions and do not count for or against your score). The CBT is the only option for the first time certifier. The CBT is a timed, closed book test administered by computer and must be taken at specified testing agencies which are geographically located throughout the United States and internationally. The SARE is a 150 multiple-choice question exam of which 135 are scored (15 are pretest questions and do not count for or against your score). The SARE is available for re-certification only, and is geared towards the advanced infection control professional that has had a minimum of 7 years of infection control practice. The questions on the SARE are more difficult. The SARE is an open-book, take-home exam mailed to the candidate and can be completed at the candidate's pace, but must be returned by **December 15** of the year in which the certification expires. Both tests are based on the most current CBIC Practice Analysis and Examination Content Outline. (In 2009 with the next publication, the SARE 8th Edition will no longer be available as a booklet with a paper and pencil answer sheet, but will be computer based but still designed to complete at your own pace within the calendar year you are due to certify.) Refer to the [Candidate Handbook](#) for more information.

I am an LPN/LVN. Can I take the CIC exam?

Yes. You will need to submit an educational waiver documenting at least 30 hours of appropriate infection control (IC) education in the past 5 years. You also need to meet the practice requirements. Refer to the [Candidate Handbook](#) for details.

I do not meet the practice requirements or the minimum 2 years of work experience; is there a waiver form I can fill out so I can still take the CIC exam?

No. There are no exceptions to the required clinical experience therefore no waivers are available for individuals who do not meet the practice requirements or the minimum 2 years of work experience.

I live in a rural, remote area; it is very expensive to get to the nearest test center to take the exam. Do you have any suggestions?

Refer to the [Candidate Handbook](#) for updated test site locations; CBIC is continuously working to add new testing sites to make taking the exam as close as possible to where you live. Thank you for taking the extra effort to become certified.

Can I still take the CIC exam in paper and pencil format? It was so much easier than taking a computer-based exam.

No. Paper and pencil technology is quickly becoming outdated; the technology to correct hand scored answer sheets is almost obsolete. The basic certification test is computer based only; the most recent publication of the SARE 7th Edition is currently a paper and pencil version but the next revision in 2009 will be web based.

I am French Canadian; why is the certification exam not offered in French?

Currently, the certification exam is offered only in English. Recently, at the request of CHICA-Canada, CBIC explored the feasibility of offering the certification exam in French; expert consultation with our Testing and Measurement firm advised us that this was not financially feasible at this time for the following reasons: All current forms of the test would have to be translated at the same time (two computer-based tests, pretest questions, and a SARE), and reviewed by a panel of bilingual content experts. A comparative analysis of the French version and the English version would need to be done to compare the difficulty level of each of the test questions in French as compared to how the

questions are written in English; this would require 30-50 individuals to sit for the French exam and await delayed test results until analysis could be completed. In addition, and most importantly, in order to maintain our accreditation with NCCA, which we proudly plan to continue, these tasks, once started, would each need to be performed every year for the life of the examination program or risk losing NCCA accreditation. In order to do this CBIC recognizes that we would need to make a long term significant budgetary commitment including the likely need to add 3-5 additional bilingual content experts to the Test Committee or form a dual Test Committee. These options are financially not feasible at this time.

I am an international candidate; why is the certification exam so US focused?

The certification exam is based on North American infection control standards of practice. There is Canadian representation on the CBIC Board of Directors and on the Test Committee which serves as the content experts for the exam questions. There are no questions on the examinations that refer to specific US or Canadian regulatory bodies.

I work in a Long-Term Care setting/Home Care setting/Ambulatory setting/Public Health setting (i.e., non acute care setting); why is the certification exam geared more to acute care practice?

The questions on the certification exam are based on North American infection control standards of practice applicable to any patient care setting. The candidate who passes the exam is qualified to practice infection control in any setting. The questions are based on the most current Practice Analysis and Certification Exam Content Outline; refer to the [Examination Content Outline](#). Candidates who work in acute care settings need to study specific areas of the content outline that they have less experience in.

I used the APIC Study Guide to study for the test and it was not helpful. Do you have additional suggestions on how to study?

The APIC Study Guide has not been developed and is not endorsed by CBIC. Questions in the APIC Study Guide are not actual certification exam questions (Are the questions in the APIC study guide follow the current content outline?). It is a conflict of interest for CBIC to provide specific test guidance. If you have specific feedback regarding the APIC Study Guide; please provide that feedback to APIC via its Web site at www.apic.org

I attended the APIC Certification Review Course and it was not helpful. Do you have additional suggestions on how to study?

The APIC Certification Review Course is not a course developed by CBIC. It is a course developed offered only by APIC. CBIC has not offered content for the

course. It is a conflict of interest for CBIC to provide specific test guidance. If you have specific feedback regarding the Certification Review Course, please provide that feedback to APIC via their website at www.apic.org

What are the most useful references to use to study for the certification exam?

CBIC primarily uses the APIC textbooks, and the most current guidelines and documents from CDC, IHI, AIA, and APIC. CBIC has developed a comprehensive reference list of primary and secondary references used to support all certification exam questions. The list is available for at www.cbic.org

Are there any CBIC products available to help me study for the certification exam?

CBIC has developed a Practice Exam available for purchase at www.cbic.org. The Practice Exam consists of 50 retired questions previously used on certification exams. The Practice Exam is designed to not only give the candidate an idea of the type and complexity of the questions asked on a certification exam, but also familiarizes the candidate with the computer technology for taking the exam.

Why is the only option to re-certify every 5 years via exam? Why can't I re-certify by earning Continuing Education credits?

The Certification Board of Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc. (CBIC) endorses the concept of voluntary, periodic certification for all infection control professionals meeting educational and practice requirements. The purpose of certification is to protect the public by providing standardized measurement of current basic knowledge needed for persons practicing infection control and prevention. CBIC believes this can only be achieved via re-examination on a periodic basis and cannot be obtained solely through continuing education alone.