

# ACC Fellows in Training

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Is a Multimodality  
Cardiovascular Imaging Board  
Exam in Your Future? **page 1**

The Proliferation  
of Board Exams **page 2**

*Cardiosource* for FITs **page 3**

## How to Become a Cardiovascular Investigator

Are you considering a career or recently accepted a position in academic cardiovascular medicine? If so, the How to Become a Cardiovascular Investigator program is an indispensable program that you must attend. This intimate and interactive program is specifically designed for Fellows in Training who are contemplating a future in academic medicine. Through plenary sessions, breakouts, networking opportunities and a dinner program, participants will have the opportunity to interact with the leading experts in the field of cardiovascular medicine. Renowned cardiovascular investigators will assist you in developing a plan for integrating an academic career with research, teaching and patient care obligations. Additionally, the faculty will provide insight on a variety of topics, including the best careers in academic medicine, how to locate the perfect job and the secrets to receiving grant funding.

There is **no fee** to attend the program and participation is limited, so reserve your space today! Visit [www.acc.org/cvi](http://www.acc.org/cvi) for more information.

## ACC Cardiology Careers

Looking for the perfect start to your career? Visit ACC Cardiology Careers for advice on searching for the right job, crafting your CV, interview techniques and much more. Take advantage of an expansive database of targeted cardiology jobs, build a resume using the resume builder tools, register for job alerts and apply directly through the Cardiology Careers site. Visit [www.acc.org/cardiologycareers](http://www.acc.org/cardiologycareers) for more information and to start down the right career path today.



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## The Proliferation of Board Exams

Over the next year, Andrew M. Freeman, M.D., will be pursuing his first year of practice at National Jewish Health in Denver. He'll also be settling into a new home, writing mortgage checks each month, paying off hefty student loans, and juggling the responsibilities that come with a new baby. On top of all that, he'll be taking four separate examinations for board certification in cardiology.

**> page 2**

## *Cardiosource* for FITs

As a Fellow in Training, gaining access to useful information that can help make the training process easier is always a priority. That's why the ACC has the FIT web page on *Cardiosource*, a site that serves to highlight and consolidate resources for FIT career development into one convenient location.

**> page 3**

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## Is a Multimodality Cardiovascular Imaging Board Exam in Your Future?

**Today, to demonstrate broad proficiency in cardiovascular imaging, a cardiologist typically takes the cardiovascular disease exam by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) and as many as three separate board certification exams in imaging, each with separate registration, credentialing and testing procedures.** It's a cumbersome process that has prompted pleas for relief from both cardiology fellows and veterans who must recertify in each of these areas.

Change is in the works. Ideas for simplifying the process are proceeding along two parallel tracks. One track involves the medical subspecialties that administer separate board exams in echocardiography, nuclear cardiology and cardiovascular CT, and the other track involves the American Board of Medical Subspecialties (ABMS). Although it isn't yet clear which approach will win out, substantial improvement in at least the application and credentialing procedures is expected soon.

As a first step, the National Board of Echocardiography (NBE), Certification Board of Nuclear Cardiology (CBNC) and Certification Board of Cardiovascular Computed

Tomography (CBCCT), along with members of the ACC Imaging Council, have been working to streamline and unify the process of registering for the three exams. The goal is to enable applicants to fill out just one application and provide just one set of documents to confirm training hours, licensure and other test prerequisites.

"Being able to go through the registration process just once would make life a lot easier for fellows," said Manuel D. Cerqueira, M.D., F.A.C.C., president of the CBCCT, a member of the ACC Imaging Council, and chairman of nuclear medicine at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. "There's been real progress to that end, and a prototype registration process is now being worked on." Dr. Cerqueira expects Fellows in Training to see the benefits of that work within the next year or two.

An even more ambitious proposal is also being explored: the creation of a unified multimodality cardiovascular imaging exam, perhaps with modules for each subspecialty and a single module covering overlapping areas of imaging science, physics, image display, radiation safety and the like.





# ACC hears FIT concerns on proliferation of board exams, gets to work

**Over the next year, Andrew M. Freeman, M.D., will be pursuing his first year of practice at National Jewish Health in Denver.** He'll also be settling into a new home, writing mortgage checks each month, paying off hefty student loans, and juggling the responsibilities that come with a new baby. On top of all that, he'll be taking four separate examinations for board certification in cardiology.

One, the general board exam in cardiovascular disease, is administered by the American Board of Internal Medicine. The other three, in nuclear cardiology, echocardiography, and cardiovascular CT, are each administered by separate subspecialty medical societies. Each body has its own credentialing, registration and testing procedures, but there is substantial overlap in the documentation required of applicants and, in some cases, the material covered in the exams. The total cost, including registration fees, prep courses and travel expenses, is expected to reach \$15,000 to \$20,000. Much of the money is due in advance, as it was during Dr. Freeman's final year of cardiology fellowship.

"On a fellow's salary, coming up with that kind of money is hard enough, but finding time to prepare and take so many exams during the first year on a new job is nearly impossible," said Dr. Freeman, who heads

the ACC's Fellows in Training (FIT) Committee. "We're hoping that the ACC, as a neutral party with no direct involvement or financial stake in the board exams, can lead the effort to simplify this process."

Dr. Freeman is not alone. A recent survey of FITs showed that 33 percent expect to take three cardiology board exams during the first year after graduation from a cardiology fellowship, while another 17 percent will take four board exams. In addition to the imaging subspecialties, the most common board exams include those for interventional cardiology, electrophysiology and vascular medicine.

Many comments from survey participants focused on the overwhelming number of cardiology board exams. Others pointed to the need to simplify the testing process and relieve the financial burden it imposes not only on newly minted cardiologists, but also on cardiology veterans who must renew board certification in multiple subspecialties every 10 years.

"We're not doubting that board exams are important," Dr. Freeman says. "It's the way it's done that needs to be improved."

The ACC is listening and actively working toward a solution. The FIT Committee has presented its concerns to the ACC Executive Committee and the Board of Trustees.

In response, ACC leadership has asked administrators at each of the examining boards to streamline the application process by expediting a system to unify registration and credentialing for board exams. These improvements would make the process more efficient and perhaps lower costs.

The ACC is also forming a committee to communicate with the examining boards about possible ways to simplify—or even unify—the exams themselves. For example, there are plans to explore the possibility of a unified cardiovascular imaging board exam (see cover article). The ACC is also committed to researching and providing guidance on which boards a cardiologist needs to take.

Each of these steps may take substantial time to accomplish. In the meantime, Dr. Freeman offers the following tips for cardiology fellows facing multiple board examinations during and immediately following fellowship: 1) Create a master calendar with all of the registration deadlines and dates for review courses and exams. Otherwise, it's easy to make missteps that can result in late fees or delays. 2) Figure out the finances in advance. Establish a substantial line of credit or look into opportunities to earn extra money through moonlighting to cover the costs.

# Cardiosource Fellows in Training Web page

by Kishlay Anand M.D., M.S.; and Nihar Desai M.D., M.P.H.

**As a Fellow in Training, gaining access to useful information that can help make the training process easier is always a priority.** That's why the ACC has the FIT web page on Cardiosource, a site that serves to highlight and consolidate resources for FIT career development into one convenient location.

The web page is updated weekly to include new case reports, journal scans, key published clinical trials and expert opinions on hot topics. The FIT page also contains resources for board preparation, career selection and information about FIT research and travel awards. Suggestions and posts from FIT members are always welcome on this page, and help the editors update the page to suit the needs of current FITs.

Because talking with other fellows in training sharing similar experiences is sometimes the best way to get information, a feature called 'talk back' is included on the site, providing FITs across the nation an opportunity to connect with one another on discussions related to curriculum reform, board preparation, advanced fellowship search and suggestions on job search. This forum provides an opportunity for FIT to interact with each other. The editors routinely review the forum and help direct any questions raised by FIT community.

The next time you're online, bookmark the following resources for your convenience:

**FIT Cardiosource page:**  
[www.cardiosource.com/clinicalcollections/clinicalcollections.asp?CCID=31](http://www.cardiosource.com/clinicalcollections/clinicalcollections.asp?CCID=31)

**FIT Page on ACC.org:**  
[www.acc.org/FIT](http://www.acc.org/FIT)

**Training Program Directory:**  
[www.acc.org/about/trngDirDatabase/default.htm](http://www.acc.org/about/trngDirDatabase/default.htm)

**Find a Job at the ACC Job Bank:**  
[www.acc.org/cardiologycareers](http://www.acc.org/cardiologycareers)

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Email the Editors! Send your comments to: [fellowsintraining@acc.org](mailto:fellowsintraining@acc.org)

# Multimodality Cardiovascular Imaging Board Exam

continued from page 1

Preliminary, high-level discussions have begun recently between the ABIM and the American Board of Radiology about the possibility of developing a cardiovascular imaging exam under the auspices of their parent organization, the ABMS. Such an exam would likely replace the multiple cardiovascular imaging exams cardiology fellows take today, each of which demonstrates proficiency in a single imaging modality.

Because of the detailed nature of such a proposal and the many political hurdles to overcome, the timeline is sure to be long. Indeed, there are no guarantees that an agreement can be reached, Dr. Cerqueira said. However, the NBE, CBNC and CBCCT are committed to the development of a multimodality cardiovascular imaging board exam — if not one administered by the ABMS, then as a joint effort of the three subspecialty boards.

"The fellows' concerns are being heard, and many people are making a real effort," Dr. Cerqueira said. "It's a detailed process, and it must be done in a way that meets the patients' needs for quality imaging, as well as the fellows' needs for a more streamlined board certification process."

## New Ways to Stay in Touch with the ACC



Stay tuned in to ACC activities and important clinical and advocacy news with "ACC in Touch," the College's new social media campaign. If you're active on the popular networking sites Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, check out the new online options for ACC members and others interested in the ACC. On Twitter, the ACC has four profiles tailored to your interests: @ACCinTouch, ACC's main Twitter account; @Cardiosource, dedicated to the latest science from *Cardiosource*; @Cardiology, ACC's advocacy account; and @CardioSmart, which features patient-centered news from *CardioSmart*. If you're a Facebook or LinkedIn member, we encourage you to become a "fan" of the ACC or join the ACC group. Both sites will feature the latest news from the College, including more information about ACC's many initiatives. It's also intended as a space to connect with others interested in cardiology. The College is looking for more ways to use emerging social media. If you have ideas, suggestions or want to get involved, contact Emily Zeigenfuse ([ezeigenf@acc.org](mailto:ezeigenf@acc.org)).