

5th International Conference on **Pediatrics and Neonatal Care**

July 21-22, 2026 | Vienna, Austria



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Factors influencing pediatric residency graduates' decisions to take the initial board examination and their likelihood of success

Introduction

The American Board of Pediatric Certifying Examination (ABP-CE) is not just a component, but the cornerstone of general pediatricians' professional training. Passing the ABP-CE on the first attempt is essential for maintaining the quality of residency programs and ensuring the successful practice of pediatric graduates.

Objectives

This study is the first to investigate how various individual factors and the residency program environment, particularly during the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, impact the performance of pediatric residency graduates on the initial board examination, specifically regarding not taking or not passing the ABP-CE.

Methods

We conducted an analysis of graduates from a single pediatric residency program between 2014 and 2024. The analysis included various factors such as the graduates' age, sex, type of degree, medical school attended, fellowship acceptance, scores from the USMLE Step 1 and in-training examinations (ITE), and the impact of training during the COVID-19 pandemic. We employed descriptive statistics and stepwise logistic regression models for our analysis. The findings are presented in terms of percentages, means, and odds ratios (OR) with a 95% confidence interval (95% CI). A p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

Among the 121 program graduates, 98 (80.9%) attempted the initial ABP-CE, with a pass rate of 85.7%. None of the demographic or educational characteristics of the residents were identified as predictors for not taking or not passing the initial ABP-CE. A lower score on the third year ITE was associated with not taking the exam, with an OR of 0.96 (95% CI 0.93, 0.99, $P < 0.03$), and not passing the exam, with an OR of 0.92 (95% CI 0.88, 0.97, $P < 0.01$). Moreover, residents who did not pass the ABP-CE were more likely to have been exposed to COVID-19 during training than those who successfully passed the exam (OR 4.06; 95% CI 1.44, 11.5, $P < 0.01$). Training during COVID-19 did not significantly impact on the decision of graduates to take the initial ABP-CE.

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Conclusion

Our study offers valuable insights for pediatricians in training, educators, and researchers, about the factors predicting outcomes on the initial ABP-CE for pediatric program graduates. It reveals that training during COVID-19 pandemic had no effect on the decision of residents to skip taking the initial ABP-CE but increased the chance for ABP-CE failure by nearly four times compared to program graduates who successfully passed the initial ABP-CE. Furthermore, the study indicated that each point reduction in scores on the third year ITE corresponded to an average increase of four percent in the likelihood of not taking the ABP-CE and an eight percent increase in the likelihood of not passing it.

Biography

Dr. Joann Carlson, MD is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, USA, and serves as Program Director for the Pediatric Residency Program. She is a dedicated academic paediatrician with extensive experience in medical education, resident training, and the delivery of high-quality paediatric healthcare. Throughout her career, she has been committed to preparing the next generation of paediatricians through innovative teaching, mentorship, and curriculum development.