

PATIENT CHARACTERISTICS IN ITEM CREATION



TIPS FROM THE NBME® ITEM-WRITING GUIDE



Some PC may be important inputs into the **diagnostic reasoning** process.



While others may lead to *incorrect conclusions and misdiagnoses*, which could be associated with harmful *patient stereotypes*.



Be mindful that *race is a social construct* not linked to biology or susceptibility to disease.



Ancestry may be **biologically important** and relevant to factors relating to health and disease.



PC should be considered based on **patient self-report**, not the assumption of the health care provider.

Patient characteristics (PC) such as age, sex, gender identity, disability, socioeconomic status, native language, country of origin, and/or occupation are sometimes mentioned within case vignettes in test items. Test items should be carefully designed to measure meaningful and plausible testing points without the influence of assumptions, bias, or stereotypes.

PC can be described and included in vignettes if they:

- ▶ are **CLINICALLY RELEVANT** and/or could aid in **DISTRACTOR QUALITY**.
- ▶ are necessary to better understand the context in which the patient is being seen (the item would be **UNREASONABLY DIFFICULT IF PC WERE EXCLUDED**).
- ▶ add to the overall exam-level **REPRESENTATIVENESS** of the **REFERENCED PATIENT POPULATION**.
- ▶ **INCREASE THE PROBABILITY** of detection, diagnosis, or recognition of an otherwise **RARE CONDITION**.
- ▶ do **NOT** contain negative **STEREOTYPES** or potential for **BIAS**.

For more best practices on item writing, [download the full NBME Item-Writing Guide](#) or [sign up for an Item-Writing Workshop](#).