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## College Sees Overwhelming Support of New ABO Examination Preparatory Course

Q and A with Lead Instructor, Dr. Dan Rejman



Dr. Daniel J. Rejman

*Editor's note: Please show this article to colleagues who are planning on taking the new scenario-based ABO exam.*

### Board certification is now a scenario-based exam.

#### How did you train to become a preparatory course instructor?

I have taught the College Prep Course for the case-based ABO examination since 2014. Studying intensely, listening to critiques after each session, and making positive changes to the course to be efficient and relevant are ways that I prepare for each course. Each year the course has been improved and fine tuned to maximize our time with the attendees. With the change in the examination format this year, the directors of the ABO have helped me and the College immensely in making the course very specific to the new format. Some aspects of the prior exam have been retained, and a large portion is new. This past spring in Los Angeles I presented the portions that I was very familiar with, and we invited experts (Dr. Allen Moffitt and Dr. Peter Buschang) to present portions of the course in their area of expertise. Working with and learning from these people is the best “on the job” training.

### How do you prepare the candidates to deal with questions about a case they “wouldn’t treat that way”?

In addition to presenting material that candidates will be expected to know for the examination, we also spend time discussing tips for approaching this exam in general. In other words, what do successful examination candidates do well, and what could others do to improve their approach to taking the exam? We cover many sample examination questions, discuss how to break down what is being asked, and how to use a structured thought process to give the most complete

and relevant answers. If you are being asked for a list of possible treatment modalities for a specific malocclusion, we want candidates to have the wherewithal to answer the question that is being asked. As an orthodontic specialist, we should all be familiar with different treatment methods (and the various pros and cons of using each), even if they aren’t our day to day favorites that we have become comfortable with in our practices.

### Do recent graduates fare differently on the exam than more experienced practitioners? Should they prepare differently?

While it’s too early to know passing ratios since attendees at the newly-revised course in May have not taken the new Scenario-based Oral Clinical Exam yet, I do know that the specifics as far as passing ratios, but I do know that the current directors of the ABO have worked tirelessly to make this examination equally accessible to orthodontists in any stage of their career, regardless of their practice environment. They will perform psychometric analyses after each examination cycle to maximize reliability, validity, and objectivity. It would make sense that recent graduates may be better prepared in some areas, while long time practitioners will be more comfortable with other parts of the exam. Our goal with the preparatory course is to give both ends of the spectrum as much information as we can to cover as many bases as possible. Most candidates leave the course with a much better idea of what they need to study and practice to be prepared for the exam, and yes, this will be different for each orthodontist.

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**How important is the prep course to passing the Board exam?**

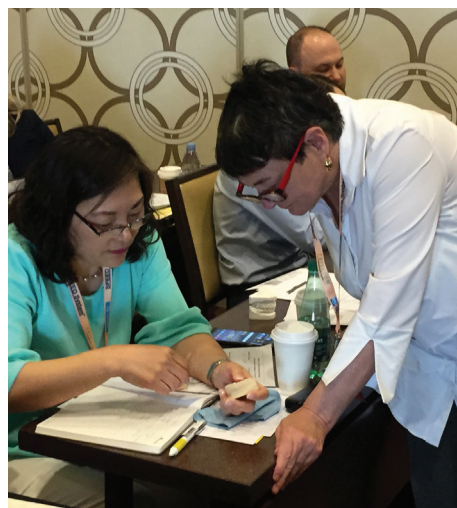
I think the best way to answer this is to recall a saying I hear over and over from orthodontists that have become board certified. "Becoming board certified does not make me a better orthodontist than the orthodontist down the street, but the process of preparing for and taking the examination has personally made me a better orthodontist than I was before." In the same way, attending this preparatory course is designed to make you much more prepared and informed than before you took the course. And by prepared, I mean that you will have a better grasp of what to study for after you return home. This course is not a short cut that is meant to replace putting in your time to prepare. This new examination is meant to be difficult, as any specialty board examination should be. I hope that after this course you will look at your cases differently, that you will stop and think productively during your busy day, and spend the time to practice analyzing pre-treatment and post-treatment records. The ABO wants you to ask yourself, "What actually happened during treatment?", "Was what happened due to growth, or from treatment?", or "Were there treatment objectives that were not met during treatment?" Asking questions similar to these, and knowing how to answer them, are in large part what separates us as orthodontic specialists.

**What is the most important thing a candidate should do prior to taking the Board exam?**

Spend the time to be prepared. We will also be doing our part. As always, this course will be modified for the better after the most recent course this past May. I will ask the attendees to review online ABO videos, and read several specific articles that will help our time to be utilized to the fullest. In response to the new exam format, we increased the prep course from four hours to eight. My fear was that we would have time to spare, but as usual, the opposite was true, and we found we ran short of time for the amount of material and hands on exercises that we had prepared. Our goal for the next course is to jump right in more quickly, with the expectation that the attendees will have reviewed what was recommended prior to the course. We will be very specific with what to review, what to bring, what will be provided, and what will be covered that day. Here is a list of some of the topics that will be covered in the upcoming courses: An introduction to the examination format, a description of what to expect on your examination day, a review and discussion of example cases covering the four examination domains, cast radiograph evaluation, using the ABO measuring gauge on provided models, a Q&A session with an ABO leader, a review of cephalometric landmarks, interpretation of cephalometric superimpositions, and determining if observed changes were from growth or treatment. I hope that you will leave with a much better idea of how to organize your preparation, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and excitement about the process of becoming board certified by the ABO.



Instructors engage in mock scenario exam.



Drs. Rigali (left) and Rejman (right) review sample records with candidates.

