

Nonsurgical Pain Management (NSPM) 2026 Content Outline and Exam Blueprint

Domain I: Anatomy, Physiology and Pathophysiology of Pain (20%)

- I.A. Anatomical and functional pain pathways
- I.B. Pain classifications and mechanisms (e.g., International Association for the Study of Pain [IASP] criteria)
 - I.B.1. Nociceptive
 - I.B.2. Neuropathic
 - I.B.3. Nociceptive
 - I.B.4. Somatic
 - I.B.5. Visceral
 - I.B.6. Referred
- I.C. Pathophysiology
 - I.C.1. Neurotransmitters
 - I.C.2. Inflammatory mediators
 - I.C.3. Pain syndromes
 - I.C.4. Aberrant anatomy
- I.D. Biopsychosocial factors influencing pain (e.g., comorbid, demographic, cultural, epidemiologic)

Domain II: Imaging Equipment and Radiation Safety (15%)

- II.A. Equipment essentials
 - II.A.1. Fluoroscopy equipment and radiation terminology
 - II.A.2. Ultrasound equipment and terminology
- II.B. Risk mitigation
 - II.B.1. Patient dose reduction
 - II.B.2. Shielding
 - II.B.3. Scatter reduction
 - II.B.4. ALARA
 - II.B.5. Exposure monitoring

Domain III: Assessment, Diagnosis and Plan of Care (20%)

- III.A. Health history
 - III.A.1. Subjective and objective findings
 - III.A.2. Red flag symptoms—identification and risk assessment
 - III.A.3. Coexisting conditions/comorbidities—identification and risk assessment
 - III.A.4. Substance use disorder—identification and risk assessment
- III.B. Screening tools for health history (e.g., function, pain scales, psychological, and opioid risk)
- III.C. Physical examination
 - III.C.1. General (e.g., appearance, vital signs, affect)
 - III.C.2. Musculoskeletal
 - III.C.3. Neurologic
 - III.C.4. Provocative testing
- III.D. Use and interpretation for diagnostic evaluation
 - III.D.1. MRI

- III.D.2. CT
- III.D.3. Electromyography/nerve conduction velocity (EMG/NCV)
- III.D.4. X-ray
- III.D.5. Ultrasound
- III.D.6. Laboratory tests
- III.D.7. Other diagnostic studies (e.g., discography, bone scan, positron emission tomography [PET], genetic testing)
- III.E. Identification of pain generator(s) (e.g., nerves, metabolic, joints, disc, facet, spine)
- III.F. Plan of care
 - III.F.1. Differential diagnosis
 - III.F.2. Treatment decisions (including shared decision making, patient goals, patient education, and expectation management)
 - III.F.3. Interprofessional collaboration, consultation and referral (e.g., nutritional, physical and/or occupational therapy, psychological, surgical, acupuncture)
 - III.F.4. Patient follow-up and treatment evaluation
- III.G. Professional aspects
 - III.G.1. Informed consent
 - III.G.2. Protection of patient rights
 - III.G.3. Medical necessity (e.g., prior authorizations, regulatory compliance, reimbursement)
 - III.G.4. Legal, statutory, regulatory, and ethical issues

Domain IV: Pharmacology (20%)

(Administration, mechanism of action, pharmacokinetics, pharmacodynamics, pharmacogenomics, drug interactions, adverse effects, indications/contraindications of the following)

- IV.A. Opioids (agonists, antagonists, mixed)
 - IV.A.1. Regulatory guidelines
 - IV.A.2. Controlled substance agreements
 - IV.A.3. Prescription drug monitoring program
 - IV.A.4. Opioid-induced constipation treatments
- IV.B. NSAIDs/antipyretic analgesics
- IV.C. Anticonvulsants
- IV.D. Antidepressants
- IV.E. Antimicrobials (e.g., prophylaxis or treatment for infection)
- IV.F. Anticoagulants/antiplatelets
- IV.G. Muscle relaxants
- IV.H. Local anesthetics
- IV.I. Corticosteroids
- IV.J. Contrast medium
- IV.K. NMDA receptor antagonists
- IV.L. Cannabinoids
- IV.M. Other medications (e.g., bisphosphonates, topical medications, alpha₂-agonists, botulinum toxin, migraine medications)
- IV.N. Supplements

Domain V: Interventional Pain Strategies (25%)

- V.A. Neuraxial principles and techniques
 - V.A.1. Anatomical considerations

- V.A.2. Interventions with ultrasound
- V.A.3. Interventions with fluoroscopy
- V.B. Peripheral principles and techniques
 - V.B.1. Anatomical considerations
 - V.B.2. Interventions with ultrasound
 - V.B.3. Interventions with fluoroscopy
- V.C. Neuroablative principles and techniques
 - V.C.1. Anatomical considerations
 - V.C.2. Interventions with ultrasound
 - V.C.3. Interventions with fluoroscopy
- V.D. Regenerative treatment principles (e.g., biologics, prolotherapy)
- V.E. Neuromodulation principles (e.g., neurostimulation and intrathecal pumps)
- V.F. Prevention, identification, and treatment of interventional complications
- V.G. Palliative and end-of-life management (e.g., neurolytic blocks, indwelling catheters)