



## Task Force on the Test of Spoken English

### Members Present:

Keith W. MacDonald (NV), *Chairman*; John H. Block (OR); Reuben Dixon (LA); and Virginia H. Fallon (CT).

### Ex-Officio Members Present:

Patricia Harris (CA).

### Others Present:

Roslyn Scheer (MD), *Executive Committee Liaison*; Carmen A. Catizone, *NABP Executive Director*; John Bollwark, Bart Clark, and Diane Signatur, *NABP Staff*.

### Introduction:

The Task Force on the Test of Spoken English met January 30, 1993 at NABP Headquarters in Park Ridge, Illinois. The Task Force was established by the Executive Committee in response to a request from the membership to consider adding the Test of Spoken English as a requirement for FPGEC Certification.

### Review of the Task Force Charge:

Members reviewed the Executive Committee's charge to the Task Force, and proposing no changes, it remained as follows:

The Task Force will examine the use of the Test of Spoken English (TSE) by the State Boards of Pharmacy and other licensing agencies. The Task Force should also examine the feasibility of utilizing the TSE as a requirement for Foreign Pharmacy Graduate Examination Committee (FPGEC) Certification and state licensure, and review the present FPGEC requirement for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

### **RESOLUTION TFTSE #1**

**WHEREAS**, demonstration of adequate spoken English communication skills by pharmacists is critical to patient safety, interactions with other health care professionals, and the delivery of comprehensive pharmaceutical care; and

**WHEREAS**, multilingual skills are recognized as an asset to the practice of pharmacy; and

**WHEREAS**, pharmacist licensure candidates who are graduates of schools or colleges of pharmacy located outside of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico possess a wide range of spoken English language communication abilities; and

**WHEREAS**, Foreign Pharmacy Graduate Examination Committee (FPGEC) Certification, which includes passing the test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), does not assess oral English communication skills;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the NABP Executive Committee refer to the appropriate committee the task of developing guidelines for incorporating the Test of Spoken English (TSE) as a condition of FPGEC Certification.

## **Background**

Task Force members discussed reports of dispensing errors that were attributed to a lack of English language communication ability. They discussed how patient counseling requires pharmacists to be able to communicate effectively with the patient. The Task Force also recognized that pharmacists must be able to communicate with other health care providers, representatives of pharmaceutical firms, government agencies, and others. In addition, Task Force members emphasized that English is the official language in the United States. The Task Force agreed that licenses to practice pharmacy are not limited to specific practice sites, and because of the increased mobility of pharmacists, the ability to communicate effectively in English is of primary importance.

The Task Force recognized that completion of the FPGEC Certification program is a first step towards licensure in many states for graduates of schools of pharmacy outside the United States. Awarding of the FPGEC Certificate allows foreign graduates to partially fulfill eligibility requirements for licensure in the states that accept the Certification. To become certified, candidates must document their education backgrounds, pass the Foreign Pharmacy Equivalency Examination (FPGEE), and pass the TOEFL with a total score of 500 or higher. The TOEFL, however, does not assess a person's ability to speak the English language.

The Task Force reviewed information concerning the TSE, including the test's validity and reliability. It found that the TSE is administered worldwide every month for the current fee of \$110.

Among the requirements for licensure of graduates of schools and colleges of pharmacy outside the United States, several state boards of pharmacy currently require successful completion of the TSE. The TSE is also required by a number of other health-related licensing bodies.

The Task Force concluded that given the wide availability of the test and the lack of other instruments that assess spoken English ability, the TSE is acceptable and should be considered as an additional to FPGEC Certification requirements.

The Task Force recommended that the Executive Committee refer this recommendation to the appropriate committee, perhaps the Advisory Committee on Examinations, for implementation, including the establishment of a passing standard for the TSE.

The Task Force emphasized that the purpose of including the successful completion of TSE as a requirement for FPGEC Certification would be to further protect the public safety, health, and welfare. The additional requirement is not intended to create a barrier to graduates of schools and colleges of pharmacy outside the United States to practice in the United States. The Task Force further recommended that a thorough analysis of the defensibility of this requirement be conducted by NABP, and that implementation of this requirement be contingent upon a favorable outcome.

### **RECOMMENDATION TFTSE #1**

The Task Force on the Test of Spoken English recommends that NABP encourage state boards of pharmacy and other licensing bodies for health professions involved in the prescribing or administration of drugs to give consideration to the assessment of the oral English communication skills of their licensure candidates.

#### **Background**

The Task Force acknowledged that the cause of dispensing errors may at times be due to the inability of the prescriber or caregiver to communicate effectively in English. The Task Force recommends that NABP encourage the licensing bodies of other health professions to set a standard for demonstration of the spoken English abilities of the individuals they license.

### **RECOMMENDATION TFTSE #2**

The Task Force on the Test of Spoken English recommends that NABP encourage ACPE to consider the inclusion of a demonstrated competency in English language oral communication skills among its accreditation standards for U.S. pharmacy education programs.

#### **Background**

The task Force reaffirmed the oral English communication skills as a necessary component of pharmacy practice for all practitioners regardless of where they are educated.