

Sajeet Sohi's USMLE Step 1 Guide

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To The Future MDs:

This whole USMLE process may seem confusing and overwhelming, but I wanted to show you the way I did it so maybe it can help you. I remember coming to Aruba and wondering how I would get from the island to the rotations... but I made it, and so can you. When I came there, I thought there would be someone or something to guide us on how to reach our career path...but I was wrong. I started MD 1 in Sept 07 and I started June 09 in clinical rotations, so there is light at the end of the tunnel don't worry. It would have been really great if someone had given this info to us, at the start of MD 1. All of the stuff I wrote is my personal opinion; other people will have other ways. There is no one way to study. I could not find a good guide out there on how to approach all the info, so this is what I have experienced on my journey from MD 1 to the end of the Step 1 Prep. I wish someone had told me all this at the start. **Medicine is based on other individual's hard work and study. Every time you read something like "the best treatment for this condition is X", study after study and 1000s of hours went into that. That is why you should realize that this journey is all about sharing the knowledge. In medicine you are always learning from another individual.**

Disclaimer: I do not provide the books and resources I have listed. How you obtain these books etc is up to you. I recommend that you get them through the proper and appropriate methods.

The Study Guide

Study Plan:

Classroom lectures are the most important source in the entire process that is your foundation. So make sure that your base is secure.

MD 1 - 4

1. Kaplan USMLE Review Materials

MD 5 "Review Semester"

2. Goljan pathology textbook

3. First Aid (Expanded explanations of First Aid: First Aid Organ Systems and First Aid General Principles)

4. Kaplan Med Essentials (Summary of all Kaplan in 1 book)

5. After you are comfortable with the info 1 - 4, then do in this order questions (easiest to hardest):

USMLERx (too easy), Kaplan (unnecessary focus on small details, not really like the USMLE),

USMLEworld (it was same level as the real test, the best question bank)

6. NBME exams

7. Be able to do 48 questions in 1 hour, that is how many questions are in each block. That is why you should do like 4 blocks of 48 questions in 1 sitting, you have to build up your test endurance.

8. Try to do 1 - 2 in MD 2 - MD 4 if you can, but if you can't start at 1 in your MD 5 review.

9. No need to buy or use any other textbooks that is not listed in 1 - 4.

General Advice:

Do Not Waste Time. Each Day is Valuable!

- The first week of each semester is usually wasted in setting up everything. In four semesters that is 4 weeks wasted. The time between semesters is like 2 weeks, so between MD 1/2, 2/3, and 3/4 that is another 6 weeks gone resting. That is 10 weeks of studying lost.

1. USMLE prep actually begins on the first day of MD 1 and ends the last day MD 4. What you do after is just a review. Studying for the quizzes, midterms, exams is USMLE prep and not only for your classes. You are learning it for the USMLE, not just to cram it for an exam.

2. Your general plan should be study hard MD 1 - 4, review MD 5, write it and start rotations in MD 6.

3. If you cannot learn something by the end of "MD 6", you are likely at your limit.

4. Studying is like filling a glass of water, it only holds so much. In a few seconds it fills, so if you leave the tap on for an hour you are not gaining anything... just wasting water and time.

5. Faster you write USMLE = better, longer = more stress = lower marks. The residency match only happens once a year, so try not to miss it.

6. USMLE = Test of understanding and efficiency and not your intelligence.

7. There are 3 steps in studying: 1. Memorizing 2. Learning 3. Understanding. You must understand the concepts

Memorizing: Coronary Artery Disease is associated with Atherosclerosis (simple to memorize)

Learning: The pathogenesis of atherosclerosis, the endothelial cell injury, foam cells etc. (what you need to know for a midterm)

Understanding: Atherosclerosis is a systemic disease, can manifest as stroke (Carotid artery thromboembolism), kidney problems because of renal artery stenosis, claudication, etc. Maybe b/c of pt's diet, occupation, genetics (familial hypercholesteremia). Think: UnderstandingSMLE

8. Make the connections between the courses, ex: do not view biochemistry cycles in isolation of the patient's glucose levels in diabetes for example. All the courses are linked together, the body is not divided into physiology, microbiology, etc.. it is a system. USMLE = making the connections, the questions link concepts from different courses. So it is not right to say, don't study this or that. They can put anything on the test. So the best strategy is to understand the material.

9. You are studying for the USMLE, so you must focus on the high-yield stuff. Do not need to read anatomy textbooks and the entire Robbins because there is no time.

10. It is just a test, the only the difference is that the scale is bigger.

11. You have to relax. If you are stressed you cannot study properly.

12. This whole process is about **personal responsibility**. In the "real world" no one cares about excuses, "my school didn't teach me this, we didn't do that." You are going to have to teach and push yourself. The only thing that matters is the results.

13. Medicine is maybe the most competitive field, every day the number of potential applicants increases. Your competition includes other Caribbean school students, students from American medical schools, and the other IMGs from around the world. So you really have to work hard, you are also competing against people with diverse education backgrounds like people with a Master's, PhD's, and trained IMGs. This is not to scare you, but you must be aware of this reality.

How To Analyze USMLE Questions:

1. Age
2. Past Medical/Surgical History
3. Patient recent activity
4. Onset of condition
5. Differential diagnosis
6. Assessment and plan of the situation

Question Source: 2010 Step 1 Content Description and General Information

Three weeks after traveling to California to study desert flowers, a 32-year-old man develops a fever, chest pain, and sore muscles. Two days later, red tender nodules appear on the shins, and the right ankle is painful and tender. An x-ray of the chest shows a left pleural effusion. Which of the following is the most likely diagnosis?

- (A) Blastomycosis
- (B) Coccidioidomycosis
- (C) Histoplasmosis
- (D) Mycobacterium marinum infection
- (E) Mycoplasma pneumoniae infection

Remember Do Not Let The Answer Options Change Your Thinking
They Could Have Easily Have Written The Following As The Answers:

- (A) Broad Based Buds
- (B) Spherule Filled With Endospores
- (C) Patient Went Splunking
- (D) Begin Prophylaxis in AIDS Patients When CD4 <50
- (E) The Isolated Specimens Grow on Eaton's Agar

So by using the methods 1 - 6 you should be able to dissect these questions.

If you understand the pathophysiology of a disease/process, it does not matter how they write the questions

Websites:

Official Sites:

USMLE (Steps 1 – 3): www.usmle.org

NBME (Administer USMLE): www.nbme.org

ECFMG (IMGs): www.ecfmr.org

NRMP (Residency Matching Process): www.nrmp.org

Unofficial Sites:

ValueMD: www.valuemd.com

StudentDoc: www.studentdoc.org

- Good info in the forums, but anyone can write anything, just use to get a general idea.

Score Estimator: www.clinicalreview.com/USMLECalculator.php

WikiTest prep: www.wikitestprep.org Good free question site.

I wish you all the best. Just ask me questions if you have any. I want to see you all do great on USMLE.

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