Preparing for USMLE Step 1
Purpose of Step 1

- **Assesses**
  - Understanding and ability to apply important concepts of the sciences basic to the practice of medicine
  - Special emphasis on principles and mechanisms underlying health, disease, and modes of therapy.

- **Ensures mastery of**
  - the sciences that provide a foundation for the safe and competent practice of medicine in the present
  - the scientific principles required for maintenance of competence through lifelong learning
USMLE Content

• [http://usmle.org/Examinations/step1/step1_content.html](http://usmle.org/Examinations/step1/step1_content.html)

• Outline, not detailed objectives

• “Broadly based learning that establishes a strong general understanding of concepts and principles in the basic sciences is the best preparation for the examination.”
Step 1 Question Format

- Only single questions with one best answer.
- Statement or question followed by three to eleven response options arranged in alphabetical or logical order.
- Some may involve interpretation of graphic or pictorial materials.
- Response options are lettered (e.g., A, B, C, D, E).
- Select the best answer to the question.
- Other options may be partially correct, but there is only ONE BEST answer.
Sample question

A 32-year-old woman with type 1 diabetes mellitus has had progressive renal failure over the past 2 years. She has not yet started dialysis. Examination shows no abnormalities. Her hemoglobin concentration is 9 g/dL, hematocrit is 28%, and mean corpuscular volume is 94 µm³. A blood smear shows normochromic, normocytic cells. Which of the following is the most likely cause?

A. Acute blood loss
B. Chronic lymphocytic leukemia
C. Erythrocyte enzyme deficiency
D. Erythropoietin deficiency
E. Immunohemolysis
F. Microangiopathic hemolysis
G. Polycythemia vera
H. Sickle cell disease
I. Sideroblastic anemia
J. β-Thalassemia trait
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Strategies for answering

• Read each question carefully. It is important to understand what is being asked.
• Try to generate an answer and then look for it in the option list.
• Alternatively, read each option carefully, eliminating those that are clearly incorrect.
• Of the remaining options, select the one that is most correct.
• If unsure about an answer, it is better to guess since unanswered questions are automatically counted as wrong answers.
Student Survey of Prep Methods

• May 2007 survey of Med 3-4 students
  – 179 respondents (72% IP, 26% ISP)

• Prep time
  – 3 weeks or less (18%)
  – 4 weeks (49%)
  – 5 weeks (16%)
  – 6 weeks or more (18%)
  – 65% felt prep time was just about right

• 58% were content with score
Helpful Prep Methods

• First Aid books (87%)
• Board Review Series books (76%)
• Kaplan Q-bank (87%)
• USMLE free practice exam (78%)
• Small group sessions (41-53%)
• Less helpful resources
  – Kaplan notes/videos (12%); Princeton Review notes (2%); Flashcards (36%); COM course materials and notes (34%); large group review sessions (29%)
Student Research and Panel

• Research group
  – Kaplan vs USMLE World
  – Other resources
    • Melissa Bickett
    • Greg Miday
    • Benson Varghese
    • Nidhi Singhal
    • Dan Kokmeyer

• Med 4 President, Jay Lee
Personal preparation: Now

- Learn the Med 1-2 material well
  - >85% review
  - 80-85% gray zone
  - <80% learning new material
- Review Med 1 material
  - Micro, immunology, pharm, neuroanatomy
- Use USMLE Content Description
- Review books (First Aid, BRS)
  - Quality varies by subject
Personal preparation: Later

• 5-8 weeks before exam
  – Ken May’s 30 day preparation schedule
  – Question bank
    • Kaplan or USMLE World
  – NBME free on-line sample exam
    • Nbme.org, click on self-assessment services
  – Prometric trial exam (for testing environ only)

• 1 week before exam
  – Take on-line NBME CBSSA self-assessment for score (~$45)
  – Use performance profile for last preparations
After the exam

• Keep documentation
  – Proof of sitting for exam
  – Score transcript

• Scores
  – Receipt by 3rd week of July
  – E-mail from NBME
  – Keep pdf of official score report
    • Use for Med 4 away electives, interviews, etc