4 essential tips for your final weeks of Step 1 study

APR 21, 2021

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Typically medical students take Step 1 of the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE®) following their pre-clinical training. For many medical students, that means their exam date is approaching. The exam is slated to go to a pass-fail scoring system in 2022, but will be scored in the traditional fashion for the 2021 testing cycle.

In that case, what should you do to make the most of your remaining time? Here are some helpful tips.

**Don’t do it alone**
Find a motivating study partner—someone who can supplement your knowledge and hold you accountable. Set up a regular weekly session where you can review what you have learned and determine what you need to learn.

**Identify, focus on high-yield topics**
Speaking broadly, Step 1 focuses on the basic sciences. “The general wisdom is that Step 1 has a significant portion of the test on physiology, pharmacology and pathology,” said Christopher Cimino, MD, chief medical officer at Kaplan Medical. “And some questions will have a combo of two or all three as part of the question.”

**Try to maintain perspective**
Your Step 1 score is a key measure that residency programs will use to evaluate you as a candidate, but it’s hardly the only one. Knowing that, students are going to have to make their own choices about how much time and energy they put into their studying.

“You have to ask yourself, on a very personal level, how much is this worth to me?” said Chantal Young, director of medical student wellness at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. “How much am I willing to sacrifice? For a lot of our students, the initial answer is everything. But you really need to think about it. Are you willing to drop your physical and mental health, your sense of self, and all the other obligations in your life to maximize your score?

**Quiz yourself against the most popular test-prep stumpers**

Over the years, the AMA has run dozens of example questions from Kaplan Medical. If you’re preparing for the Step 1 exam, you might want to know which questions are most often missed by test-prep takers.

We’ve compiled a list of the top 5 most-read Step 1 stumpers and if you want to further test your knowledge, check out our full index of Step 1 test prep questions.

The AMA selected Kaplan as a preferred provider to support you in reaching your goal of passing the USMLE® or COMLEX-USA®. AMA members can save 30% on access to additional study resources, such as Kaplan’s Qbank and High-yield courses. Learn more.