



Office of Medical Education Students' Newsletter

Spring 2007
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Tulane University School of Medicine
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MISSION

WE CONTRIBUTE
TO THE MEDICAL
STUDENTS'
EDUCATION BY
PROVIDING
FACULTY
DEVELOPMENT,
EDUCATIONAL
SUPPORT AND
SERVICES TO
FACULTY AND
STUDENTS.



Introducing the OME Students' Newsletter...

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide extended on-going information and resources to students in the areas of:

- Test taking strategies,
- Study skills,
- Careers in Medicine,
- Updates on Peer Tutoring,
- Resources for USMLE Test Preparation,
- Web-based Course Evaluations.

The ultimate goal of this resource is to support students as they matriculate through the medical program. The OME has updated its Website to include a Students' Resource webpage that provides information on Careers in Medicine, Peer Tutoring, seminars, and general resources.

Web address: http://www.som.tulane.edu/ome/student_resources/

The editor welcomes short articles from the students that inform others about their research projects, interesting clerkships, study strategies and test taking strategies for courses you have or currently enrolled in this term and suggestions for success as a medical student. Additionally, student organizations are welcome to place announcements. This is your newsletter; please utilize it by submitting articles, letters to the editor and general information.

In this issue...

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Test Preparation..... | 2 |
| Managing Stress..... | 4 |
| Test Taking Strategies.. | 6 |
| OME..... | 7 |

Test Preparation Sessions...

You are cordially invited to attend the
USMLE Step 1 Preparation Sessions...

Thursday, May 10 at 1:00 p.m. & Friday, May 11 at 9:00 a.m.
SOM, Room 6065

With Dr. Ronald Markert



Read more on pages 2-3.

USMLE Step 1 Preparation

You are cordially invited to attend the first in a series of interactive lectures. The objectives of this lecture is to prepare students to successfully complete the USMLE Step 1 Preparation: Research Methods, Biostatistics, and Clinical Epidemiology. (See letter from Dr. Markert-p.3)

OFFICE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION

invites the Class of 2009 to attend the

USMLE STEP 1 PREPARATION:

RESEARCH METHODS, BIOSTATISTICS, AND CLINICAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

with



RONALD J. MARKERT, PHD

PROFESSOR

ASSOCIATE CHAIR FOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY BOONSHOFT SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Thursday, May 10 at 1:00 p.m. SOM Room 6065



Friday, May 11 at 9:00 a.m. SOM Room 6065

USMLE Step 1 Preparation: Research Methods, Biostatistics, and Clinical Epidemiology

Dates/Times: Thursday, May 10 at 1:00 p.m. & Friday, May 11 at 9:00 a.m.

Location: SOM Room 6065

Presenter

Ronald J. Markert, PhD

Professor of Medicine

Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine

Formerly: Director, Office of Medical Education, Tulane SOM

Dear Tulane SOM Class of 2009:

Some of you will remember me from our days in Houston during your T1 year. I enjoyed being part of your very unusual first year of medical school, commend you on your perseverance during 2005-06, and hope you are prospering in New Orleans.

For many years I have conducted a session that prepares second-year medical students about to take USMLE Step 1. The session includes the areas of Research Methods, Biostatistics, and Clinical Epidemiology. Happily for me, your education leaders at Tulane SOM have invited me to New Orleans in May to assist you in these Step 1 areas.

Here is some basic information:

1. The preparation session will include seven topics: research methods and designs, measurement, hypothesis testing, risk assessment in medicine, clinical diagnostic testing (sensitivity, specificity, etc.), statistical tests, and miscellaneous matters.
2. These topics are not a large part of Step 1, but, as you know, every question counts.
3. The session will be offered TWICE (for your convenience). So, unless you are extremely obsessive/compulsive, you will only want to attend ONCE.
4. The session will last about 2.5 hours (including a short break at a convenient time).
5. While I, of course, believe your time will be spent well, the best advocates for this USMLE prep session are the T3s and T4s. I suggest you contact them on the value of attending a session.
6. If you have any questions about the session, send me an email at ronald.markert@wright.edu. Also, I am more than pleased to answer your individual questions on these topics as you work through practice questions from the USMLE or commercial sources.

I hope to see you in May, and, if you have the time, drop me an email to let me know how you are doing.

Self-help for Stress

What is Stress?

Stress is the "wear and tear" our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment; it has physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative feelings. As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to action; it can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to health problems such as headaches, upset stomach, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke. With the death of a loved one, the birth of a child, a job promotion, or a new relationship, we experience stress as we re-adjust our lives. In so adjusting to different circumstances, stress will help or hinder us depending on how we react to it.

How Can I Eliminate Stress from My Life?

As we have seen, positive stress adds anticipation and excitement to life, and we all thrive under a certain amount of stress. Deadlines, competitions, confrontations, and even our frustrations and sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives. Our goal is not to eliminate stress but to learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us. Insufficient stress acts as a depressant and may leave us feeling bored or dejected; on the other hand, excessive stress may leave us feeling "tied up in knots." What we need to do is find the optimal level of stress, which will

individually motivate but not overwhelm each of us.

How Can I Tell What is Optimal Stress for Me?

There is no single level of stress that is optimal for all people. We are all individual creatures with unique requirements. As such, what is distressing to one may be a joy to another. And even when we agree that a particular event is distressing, we are likely to differ in our physiological and psychological responses to it.

The person who loves to arbitrate disputes and moves from job site to job site would be stressed in a job, which was stable and routine, whereas the person who thrives under stable conditions would very likely be stressed on a job where duties were highly varied. Also, our personal stress requirements and the amount which we can tolerate before we become distressed changes with our ages.

It has been found that most illness is related to unrelieved stress. If you are experiencing stress symptoms, you have gone beyond your optimal stress level; you need to reduce the stress in your life and/or improve your ability to manage it.

How Can I Manage Stress Better?

Identifying unrelieved stress and being aware of its effect on our lives is not sufficient for reducing its harmful effects. Just as there are many sources of stress, there are many possibilities for its management. However, all require effort

toward change: changing the source of stress and/or changing your reaction to it. How do you proceed?

1. Become aware of your stressors and your emotional and physical reactions.

- Notice your distress. Don't ignore it. Don't gloss over your problems.
- Determine what events distress you. What are you telling yourself about meaning of these events?
- Determine how your body responds to the stress. Do you become nervous or physically upset? If so, in what specific ways?

2. Recognize what you can change.

- Can you change your stressors by avoiding or eliminating them completely?
- Can you reduce their intensity (manage them over a period of time instead of on a daily or weekly basis)?
- Can you shorten your exposure to stress (take a break, leave the physical premises)?
- Can you devote the time and energy necessary to making a change (goal setting, time management techniques, and delayed gratification strategies may be helpful here)?

3. Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress.

- The stress reaction is triggered by your perception of danger...physical danger and/or emotional danger. Are you viewing your stressors in exaggerated terms and/or taking a difficult situation and making it a disaster?
- Are you expecting to please everyone?
- Are you overreacting and viewing things as absolutely critical and urgent? Do you feel you must always prevail in every situation?
- Work at adopting more moderate views; try to see the stress as something you

can cope with rather than something that overpowers you.

- Try to temper your excess emotions. Put the situation in perspective. Do not labor on the negative aspects and the "what if's."
4. Learn to moderate your physical reactions to stress.
- Slow, deep breathing will bring your heart rate and respiration back to normal.
 - Relaxation techniques can reduce muscle tension. Electronic biofeedback can help you gain voluntary control over such things as muscle tension, heart rate, and blood pressure.
 - Medications, when prescribed by a physician, can help in the short term in moderating your physical reactions. However, they alone are not the answer. Learning to moderate these reactions on your own is a preferable long-term solution.
5. Build your physical reserves.
- Exercise for cardiovascular fitness three to four times a week (moderate, prolonged rhythmic exercise is best, such as walking, swimming, cycling, or jogging).
 - Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals.
 - Maintain your ideal weight.
 - Avoid nicotine, excessive caffeine, and other stimulants.
 - Mix leisure with work. Take breaks and get away when you can.
 - Get enough sleep. Be as consistent with your sleep schedule as possible.
6. Maintain your emotional reserves.
- Develop some mutually supportive friendships/relationships.
 - Pursue realistic goals, which are meaningful to you, rather than goals others have for you that you do not share.
 - Expect some frustrations, failures, and

sorrows.

- Always be kind and gentle with yourself-
-be a friend to yourself.

Source: The Counseling Center at the University of Illinois
<http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/brochures/testanx.htm>

Test Taking Strategies

Answering Multiple Choice Questions

1. Before answering any questions, read the directions thoroughly and carefully. If the directions are not clear, ask the instructor or test proctor for clarification.
2. Read each question carefully. See if you can predict the answer before looking at the options.
3. Read ALL of the multiple-choice options in their entirety before choosing an answer. Avoid the temptation to mark the first option that looks good (sometimes a "good" option will be listed before the "best" option).
4. If you cannot select the correct answer after several seconds of thought, cross out any options that you are sure are wrong, put a mark next to the question, and move on to the next question.
5. The goal is to do all the relatively easy questions first, then come back later to the difficult ones. But don't rush. Be sure to give each question some thought before moving on.
6. When you have gone through the entire test once, go back to the items you have marked. This time concentrate on eliminating as many options as you can.
7. Be wary of options that include extreme words, such as "always," "never," "all," "best," "worst," "none." (If you have to guess, it's usually best to eliminate options with extreme words).

8. Read each option as if it were a true-false question. Cross out all the options that are false.

9. However, pay close attention to words such as "not" or "except." (e.g., "Which of the following is not true about the Civil War?"). Circle words like "not" and "except" whenever you see them, to make them stand out. (Usually these words are a signal that all of the options are true except one, and your task is to pick out the FALSE option).

10. If you have no idea what the correct answer is, guess (as long as you are not penalized for guessing). Some tips that may improve your guessing accuracy (however none of these are foolproof, or guaranteed to work) include:

- * If two options look similar, except for 1 or 2 words, usually one of these is the correct answer.

- * If two options have the same meaning, usually both are wrong.

- * If two options consist of words that look or sound the same (e.g., "interference" vs. "interferon") one of these is often the correct answer.

- * If the options cover a wide range of numerical values, a value at or near the middle is often a good guess.

- * An option that is longer or more detailed than the other options is often the correct answer.

- * The option "all of the above" is frequently correct.

11. If time permits, recheck your answers for accuracy before turning in your exam.

Adapted from: Ellis, D.B. (1991). *Becoming a master student*, (6th ed.). Rapid City, S.D.: College Survival, Inc.
Pauk, W. (1984). *How to study in college*, (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

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Our Office is available to support faculty in the process of educating students and supporting students in areas that will ensure their academic success. Presently, the Office Medical Education has 11 missions that directly align with the institutional goals, on which it operates:

- *Consultation on Teaching*
- *Curriculum Development*
- *Evaluation of Medical Student Performance*
- *Program Evaluation*
- *Medical Education Research*
- *Publication of Scholarship in Medical Education*
- *Proposals for Medical Education Grants*
- *Evidence Based Medicine*
- *Faculty Development*
- *Educational Technology*
- *Academic Counseling for Students and Residents*