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Outline of talk

- What is the USMLE?
- Why do them?
- What's involved?
- How to apply
- When to do them
- Survival Tips

What is the USMLE?

- USMLE = United States Medical Licensing Exam
- 4 parts – Step 1, 2 CK + 2 CS, 3
- ECFMG certification; 1 + 2 CK+ 2 CS + degree
- Must pass to be allowed practise medicine in US
- Time frame – 7 years

USMLE 2009 Bulletin of Information

"The USMLE assesses a physicians ability to apply knowledge, concepts, and principles, and to demonstrate fundamental patient-centred skills, that are important in health and disease and that constitute the basis of safe and effective patient care"

Purpose of Step 1

"assesses whether you understand and can apply important concepts of the sciences basic to the practice of medicine, with special emphasis on principles and mechanisms underlying health, disease, and modes of therapy. Step 1 ensures mastery of not only the sciences that provide a foundation for the safe and competent practice of medicine in the present, but also the scientific principles required for maintenance of competence through lifelong learning" (USMLE bulletin of information 2010)

What are you being assessed on?

- Your ability to apply concepts of medical science in an attempt to solve medical problems
- Not simply memorizing facts
- Ability to think and solve problems

Why do the USMLEs?

- Have option to work in the USA in the future
 - Residency
 - Research
 - Fellowship
- Revision of curriculum to date
 - Learn topics/concepts not covered previously!

Step 1

- CBT – computer based test
 - Closest locations: Munich, Berlin... Zagreb. Also, London, Lisbon
 - Prometric testing facilities
- 7 blocks of 46 Multiple Choice Questions = 322 questions (1 correct answer)
 - 15 min intro, 60 mins/block, 45 mins breaks (incl. lunch)
=
one long 8 hour day!!

Content

- Step 1 includes test items in the following content areas:
 - anatomy,
 - behavioural sciences,
 - biochemistry,
 - microbiology,
 - pathology,
 - pharmacology,
 - physiology,
 - interdisciplinary topics, such as nutrition, genetics, and aging.

Recent changes to format of exam

- Number of questions reduced
- New passing score (188 vs 185)
- New types of questions being asked
 - Auscultation!!

Time for a test....



Sample question

A 29-yr old Caucasian male requests treatment for infertility. Routine patient history reveals frequent colds and sinus infections. Examination of a semen sample shows large numbers of non-motile spermatozoa. Chest and abdominal X-rays reveal multiple anatomic abnormalities. Analysis of the patient's sperm by electron microscopy would most likely reveal;

- A) Absence of basal bodies
- B) Lack of mitochondria in the midpiece
- C) Dynein arms missing from the outer doublets
- D) Radial spokes are incorrectly coiled
- E) Cross-links between axoneme and plasma membrane are shortened

Sample question

A 21-yr old man falls through a glass window and suffers a deep gash in the posterolateral aspect of the left side of the neck. Examination reveals that the level of the left shoulder is lower than the right, and the patient has difficulty shrugging the left shoulder against resistance.

Which of the following movements will prove difficult for the patient?

- A) Flexing the left arm 60 degrees
- B) Extending the left arm 60 degrees
- C) Abducting the left arm more than 90 degrees
- D) Internally rotating the left arm
- E) Externally rotating the left arm

Things to note

- CBT (Computer Based Test)
 - Looking at screen
- MCQ format
 - 5+ options
 - Best/most appropriate answer
 - Can often discount some answers straight away
 - Graphs/charts/histology/pathology pictures/slides
 - Interpret basic laboratory results
 - Double/Triple jump questions
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ will begin with clinical vignette

IMPORTANT

- Not every question asked will count towards your final mark
- Experimental questions
- Weird/ridiculously difficult stuff
 - Test – for future exams
- WILL NOT BE TOLD WHICH ONES DO NOT COUNT

Step 1 Score

- Will be notified that your report is ready for viewing
 - Requires login to website
 - Usually about 3 weeks after you sat it
- Given two numbers and a breakdown of how you did by topic
- Complicated!

Step 1 Score

- Three digit number e.g. 210 (max 300?)
 - Minimum to pass is 188
 - Equivalent to answering about 60-70% of the answers correctly
- Two digit number e.g. 87 (max 99)
 - Minimum to pass is 75 (=188 on 3-digit)
 - For each 1 point increase, your 3-digit score has to go up by about 3

What does the score mean?

- What the scores are NOT:
 - A percentage (e.g. you answered 95% correct)
 - A percentile (e.g. you did better than 67% of the other people who sat it)
- First Aid: *"gauges how well you have performed with respect to the content of the exam"*
 - Content of the exam is standardised; you get a mix of easy, medium and hard questions
 - Everyone who has sat it in the new format has gotten a similar mix
 - Scores should be comparable across different years
 - Measures what level of knowledge you have

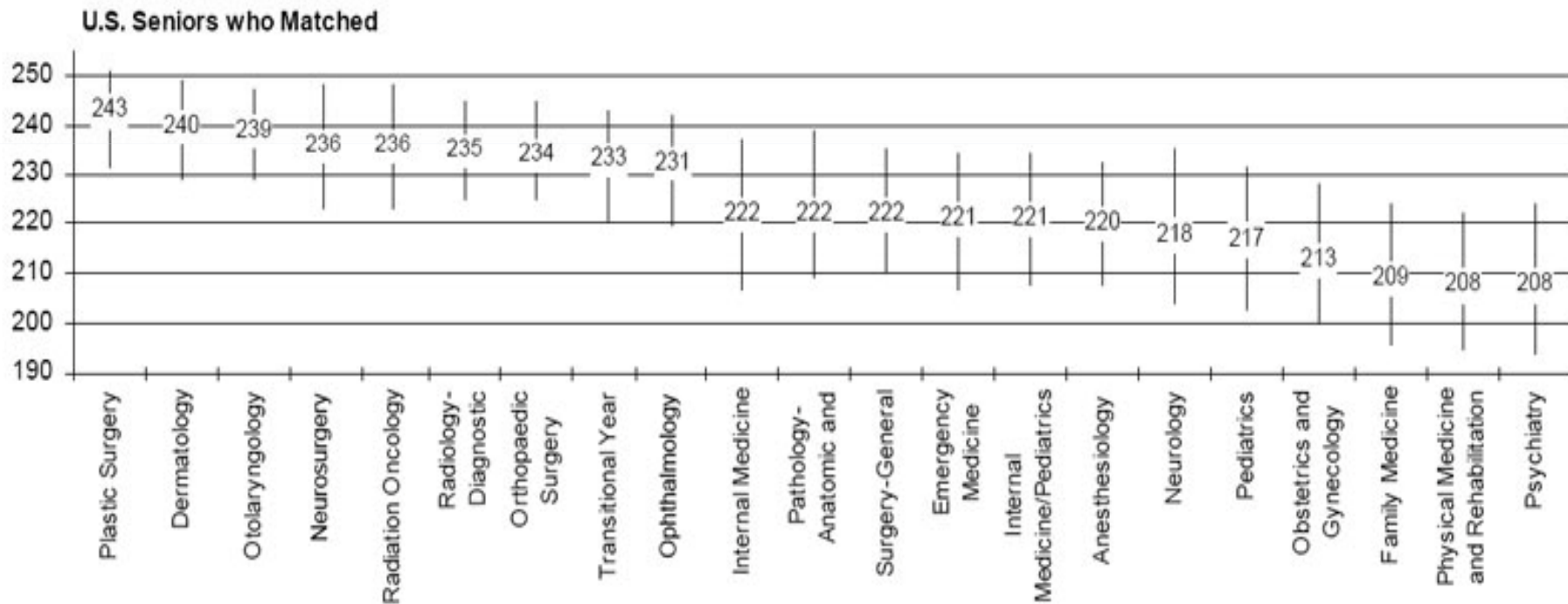
Pass rates

	US & Canadian (percentage)	IMG (percentage)	Passing Score
USMLE Step 1	91	63	188 (75)
USMLE Step 2 CK	94	74	187 (75)
USMLE Step 2 CS	97	70	Pass/Fail
USMLE Step 3	94	71	187 (75)

Score-Residency Match-Up

Chart 10

USMLE STEP 1 SCORES OF MATCHED APPLICANTS BY PREFERRED SPECIALTY
U.S. Seniors and Independent Applicants



Step 2

- 2 parts
 - Clinical Knowledge 8 blocks of 44 MCQs in 9 hours
 - Clinical diagnosis and disease pathogenesis
 - Clinical Skills 12 standardised patients 15 min exam, 10 min clinical note
 - Has to be done in 1 of 5 cities in US
 - \$1200!!!

Step 3

- Examines ability to provide unsupervised medical care
 - Generally at the end of first year of residency
 - 2 day exam
 - Way down the line!!

Post-graduate training (Residency)

USA

Internal Med – 3 yrs
Family Med – 3 yrs
General Surgery – 5 yrs
Pediatrics – 3 yrs

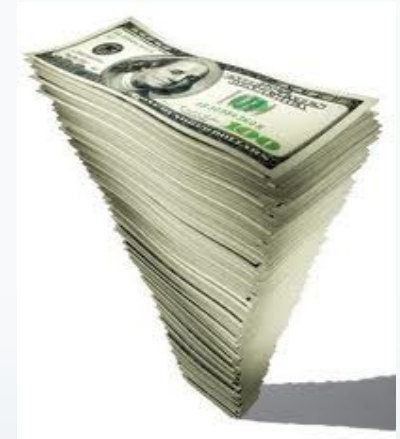
<http://rcpsc.medical.org/>

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/education-careers/graduate-medical-education/freida-online.shtml>

How to apply

- REGISTER EARLY!!
 - www.ecfm.org
 - IWA – Interactive Web Application
 - Online part – questionnaire
 - Form 186 – Certificate of Identification (CIN) received by email to be filled out by you and signed/returned by Study Affairs Office (Marketa)
 - Get an ECFMG identification number
- Select a 3-month eligibility period e.g. Jan-Feb-March
 - Completed application need to be in by 25th day of that period to get that period
- Can take 6 weeks!! Email confirmation of receipt
- When registration is complete, you will receive Scheduling Permit
 - Login to site and choose date for the exam
 - Calendar format – certain days only
- If don't get preferred date, keep checking – can schedule up to 5 days before date you want

Cost



- US \$740 to sit exam + \$170 fee to sit overseas = **\$910**
- Can change date within eligibility period for free
 - Min 5 days before original date
- Can change eligibility period for \$50
- Associated costs

How to do it.....

- Now
 - Research it yourself
 - MAKE A DECISION and get organised early!!!
 - Take the test or not
 - Time frame
 - Register- www.ecfmg.org
- 6 Months before
 - Getting organised; books, timetable
 - Consider starting study
 - Get online application underway, get Form 186
- Study period – 2 months of solid studying
 - Preferred exam date!!!

Resources

Books & Seminars

- FIRST AID!
- Goljan
- Doctors in Training
- Kaplan

Question Banks & Practice Exams

- USMLE World
- Kaplan
- NBME Practice Exams

When to do Step 1...

- After 4th Year (or 3rd year if you've already finished all preclinical subjects, e.g. pharmacology)
- Summer
- Winter break ("Exam time!")

If considering doing them....

- Definitely do them!
- Planning is key!!!
- Timetable
- Fix an exam date – AND STICK TO IT
 - NBME test – are you ready??
- Don't do them lightly
 - Financial, time, social

How not do it.....

- Not to be taken lightly!
- Think they are a walk in the park
 - Topics not covered
- Do them because other people are
- Plan to take time off studying
 - Short term memory won't cut it!
- Think you can do them part-time
 - Social life, sport, recreation (but try to stay healthy!)

Further information

- www.ecfmg.org
- <http://rumorsweretrue.wordpress.com/usmle-step-1/>
- <http://www.usmle.org/>

Questions?

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