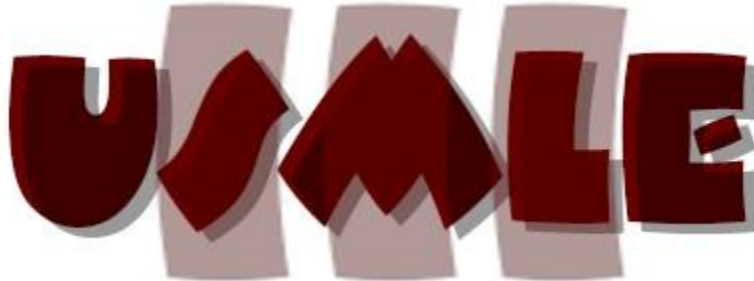


## MY USMLE STEP 1 PREPARATION



**W**hen I was preparing for my step 1 preparation I was constantly on the lookout for a site/blog/note which would help me better in cracking this enigma of an exam. I found many but all in bits and pieces. So I decided that once my exam was over I would make a comprehensive albeit slightly lengthy preparation guide which would be helpful and which addresses most of the doubts of the people who take up this exam.

First off. If you are giving your step 1 in a period of 1 month or less you have no business reading this!! Hell, you aren't supposed to be mooching around these forums in the first place!!! This is the time you need to peak. But if you are extremely confident (over confident) or you are not taking your exams seriously then you are very welcome to go through this for a good read ☺

This is mainly written for those who have 2 months or more to spare, those who are beginning and for those who have no idea just where to begin!!

So let the journey begin ☺

### BACKGROUND:

**E**very story has a background and so does mine. You can skip directly to the next part if you are not interested but you will miss the flow of the story. This is just my way of establishing my credentials so that it serves as a point of comparison.

I was a good student in school. I was among the top 3 in my class till my 9<sup>th</sup> grade, when the effects of puberty struck in full force. It made me lazy and interested in everything else, other than studies. Still I managed to hold my own coming in the top 10 in a class of 45 ☺ Upon finishing my 12<sup>th</sup> grade I made my first big mistake. I took my medical entrance exam very lightly. Blame it on the fish in the small pond syndrome! I was in



my own cozy world having no idea of the cut throat competition in the ocean outside and needless to say when I stepped out for the first time I was massacred!!!

Lesson learnt the first time. I sat down to study another year for my medical entrance, but my dad would hear nothing of it. He was anxious that I won't be able to do it the 2<sup>nd</sup> time around either. So he insisted on doing my software engineering. So it was software engineering during the day, and medical entrance in the night. Double life having taken a new meaning now I suppose ☺ So, I cleared 2 semesters in software with distinction and made it through medical entrance! I ditched software and went into the life of a doctor.



During med school I was a good student in the first 2 yrs and average in the remaining 3. Blame it on writing 2 books, sitting on the cultural committee, students committee and being the editor of the yearbook.

Once med school was over I was not in any confusion. While others started preparing for USMLE or the Indian entrance I went to work. Yeah. My dad had a simple philosophy. "YOU REALISE THE WORTH OF YOUR EDUCATION ONLY WHEN YOU PAY FOR IT YOURSELF" So, I had to take bank loans to pay my education and once when I was out of med school I had to pay it back. Though the bank gave me a period of 10yrs to give it back, I just hated having this burden of a loan on my conscience. I totally sympathize with Atlas who had to brace the weight of the world on his shoulders! So for the next 4 months I worked 24/7 paid back my loans, bought a laptop and a new mobile.



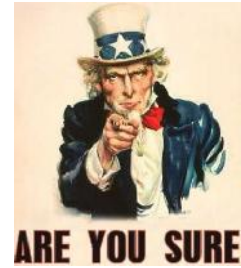
Then I decided to give the Indian PG entrance a go. So I studied for 4 months and cracked the exam. I had almost every seat in every discipline at my disposal. Both at the national and at the state level. But then there was the proverbial twist in the tale. My girlfriend cleared her first step in USMLE and went to the states. Her whole family was in the states and she made it aptly clear that she was not going to come back to settle in India. So, after a lot of drama and other side accompaniments I decided to prepare for my USMLE. I have no regrets giving up my Indian seat. I love her a lot. And she is definitely worth more than a seat ☺



So with this background now we can go into the actual story ☺

## **BE SURE:**

**G**et your priorities straight in the first place. USMLE is tough, costly and will drain your patience, energy and at times your sanity! Please don't think you can do other exams like the Indian pg with USMLE. It's like keeping your foot in 2 different boats and you will end up falling face first in the water! I have no intention to scare you guys. Just laying out the hard facts in front of you. USMLE is totally different from other exams. While other exams are more fact oriented, USMLE is more concepts oriented. You will need to work hard and put up with lots of ups and downs. Starting from filing your application to writing the actual exam there will be troubles and you just have to smile as you make your way through them patiently. The rewards will be worth it 😊



## **MONEY:**

**T**he entire process is going to blow a huge hole in your pocket. Step 1 alone will cost you around 1-1.2 lakhs including the application fees. That's roughly 2500\$. You will need the money for the application, mailing it, phone calls to ecfmg, nbme, q banks, print outs of eBooks, eBooks (Amazon fans) and other misc expenses. If you decide to study away from home (like I did) and/or if you are a high maintenance person the cost would get much higher. If your parents are sponsoring you then you have nothing to worry about, if you have to eke out your living like yours truly then it's always good to have an idea of the budget you are looking at.



## **FAITH:**

**I**t's very important that you have faith. Especially in yourself and your ability. It's an extremely doable exam. You don't have to be a genius or have special abilities to crack this. It's good if you believe in god. I do. There will be times during your preparation when you will begin to have serious doubts on yourself and your abilities. It's at times like this when prayer and meditation comes in handy. You may be an atheist or whatever else they call it these days. But it's best to have faith in a power than higher yourself because sometimes we have the tendency to fail ourselves.



## **DURATION:**

**V**aries from person to person and according to your luck. If there are no hiccups in your application process and you are a really brilliant person then you can give the exam in 2-3 months. For the rest of us average Joes it takes about 6-8 months. I took 10 months. 4 months earning the money for my step and the rest 6 months for the actual prep. I could have given it earlier, but there were problems in my application process and my college took their own sweet time in moving their bureaucratic ass!! One thing you guys should be careful of. Don't jump too early into the exam, but be careful not to dilly dally too much. 6 months is an average and max up to 1 yr. You basically get one shot at the exam to score high. You have to be prepared but should also be confident to give your exam in a timetable. The more time you take, the more difficult it gets. Preparation time beyond a yr is certainly not recommended.



## **APPLICATION:**

**T**he entire procedure on how to do it is given quite clearly at [www.ecfmg.org](http://www.ecfmg.org) including the registration and individual application for the steps. You should download the brochure and go carefully through it from page to page. Once, twice, thrice. The more, the better. You must be very careful when entering your details online because it's next to impossible to get them corrected once you make a mistake (personal experience speaking) and will delay your application further! To give a rough time table it would take about one month starting from registration to them accepting your application. That's in a perfect world! Expect delays along the way including but not limited to ecfmg delays, your mistakes in application process, the dean on a vacation to Hawaii, postal strike, your credit card company deciding not to cooperate with you and the daily horoscope asked you not to!! My application process itself took 2 months due to a silly mistake I made in my online registration in a hurry!! So in case you have any doubt, get it clarified even if it means calling up ecfmg rather than making a mistake and spending the next 3 months trying to get it right!



## **LOCATION:**

**T**hat's very important. Personally speaking, since I was in hostel for 6 yrs I found it difficult studying at home. In addition studying at 24/7 at home is wrought with constant distractions. The TV, the daily chores at home, family dramas, your pet dog and even the pretty girl next door. So there are 3 options

1. If you are joining Kaplan prep then that's where you will be naturally spending most of your time. Costly. And in my opinion definitely over hyped.

2. Joining a library. Great option. Except in Manipal where they don't allow outsiders in the library. Rest of the libraries allow for a small fee. It's a great option. Helps you stay focused. Cuts of the distractions and a great place to pick up chicks ☺
3. Move out of home. That's the option I took. I moved to Manipal and stayed at a friend's house. Worked out for me. I returned home in the final month of my prep because my centre was near my home and more importantly I ran out of money ;)

Of course, if you are the extremely strong willed kind that won't be swayed by anything or you are the homely kind then studying at home is always a good option. Cuts expenses and there is nothing better than homemade food.

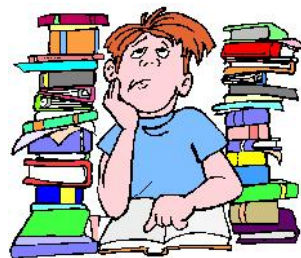
Do ensure that the place you choose for studying is well lit, relatively sound proof and well ventilated. Certainly not next the TV or the dining room!!! I used to study in the balcony and the portico and the truth be told the fresh air used to clear up my clogged brain many a time and was certainly helpful!!



### **STUDY MATERIALS:**

**A** good general must mobilize his troops properly before you head for war. You need to have an idea of the materials at your disposal before you plan out your studies. I will outline my study materials

1. Kaplan videos
2. Kaplan notes
3. First aid 2010
4. Goljan Pathology both notes and audio
5. BRS behavioral, physiology, biochemistry
6. Conrad Fischer 100 cases of medical ethics
7. High yield biostatistics
8. Road map to Neuroanatomy



If you are joining Kaplan course, then they will be providing the first 2. If you have a lot of money you can buy the rest. If not or if you are a replica of Scrooge then you can download the same! You just have to be very patient when searching. Everything is out there. U just have to look for it at the right places.



Remember what works for me, need not work out for you. Neuroanatomy was an extremely weak area for me. So I had to pay special attention to it. Some other subjects maybe your Achilles heel.

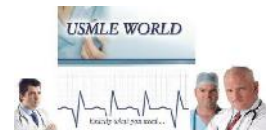
Since my girlfriend had written step 1 before me she sent me all the Kaplan videos and notes that she had. Personally I feel it's not worth joining Kaplan in India. It costs around 60,000 rupees that's 1500\$ and they give the notes and you just have to sit and watch the videos! For those who have difficulty sitting in one place or suffering from ADHD it's a good idea, but a much better option will be to access your local library at less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> the cost of attending a Kaplan course.

And there is no shortage of books either in the market. Each claiming to be better than the best and which will work magical wonders for you!! If you keep on collecting and reading so many books not even 10yrs will suffice to write your exam! Remember, it's not how many books that you have read that count. It's how many times you have read the same book that matters. Whatever you decide to read, stick to it, be thorough with it from page to page. Don't be tempted seeing your peers studying something which you have never heard of before. Your studies is not connected to theirs in any way ☺

### **QUESTION BANKS:**

**T**here are 3 major question banks. USMLE world, USMLERx and Kaptest. I have gone through a few questions of USMLERx and they do not reflect the actual USMLE pattern. Both UW and Kap are excellent question banks. I will try to highlight their main features.

UW has very difficult questions. They ask the nitty gritty things. The explanations are quite lengthy but extremely useful. It takes time to get the q bank done. Till the time I had done UW they had not incorporated multimedia questions which is a drawback as in the USMLE there will be multimedia questions. Also when you subscribe for UW there are 2 four block simulated exams. Not quite like NBME but not bad either.



Kaptest is more straight forward. It focuses more on the commonly tested aspects. It has lots of audio and video questions and the explanations are quite good without being overly lengthy. There is a 150 q diagnostic test which is helpful.



My recommendation is to take both the q banks. Do UW after you have finished the basic notes first and then concentrate on kaptest during the final parts of your preparation. Preferably take 2 months of subscription of UW because it will take at least a month to go through it once and then you do need to revise the questions. If you are doing kaptest in the end, then a month is sufficient as towards the end you will be doing a lot of questions.

Online you will come across many offline qbanks. They are snapshots of the previous qbanks taken by students. Its good in a way if you are looking to save money. But it won't give you the actual feel of the exam. Also, many questions go missing during the snapping process and some of them are quite old.

If given the choice of choosing only one qbank I would recommend to go for kaptest. The final choice is up to you. But whatever you decide to do, be thorough in it keeping in mind that at least revising it 3 times is an absolute must.

### **NBME:**

**F**or step 1 there are a series of 7 mock exams administered online by nbme. You can visit [www.nbme.org](http://www.nbme.org) . These are 7 forms each containing 200qs. At the time of writing this forms 1-5 cost 50\$ each and forms 6-7 cost 60\$ each. That's quite a heavy amount. But they are absolutely worth it. These exams give you an idea of how good your preparation is and the expected USMLE score. I gave forms 4-7online and did 1-3 offline and it definitely made a difference. They don't give any explanations but forms 6 and 7 lets you know which questions you have gone wrong but it won't give you the correct answer either ;)



On many forums you can see students discussing nbme questions. If you are planning to give them then it's recommended you don't see the questions because it will adversely affect your own preparation estimation. Once you have given the relevant forms then you can discuss the questions the answers of which you are not sure of.

### **STUDY PARTNER:**

**W**hen I started off down the USMLE path I came across this "STUDY PARTNER" enigma. So what's this study partner thing all about?

Since preparing for the usmle is a lonesome and tiring process it's always good to have a study partner. A study partner is someone who is preparing for the same step as you and would probably give her exam the same time as you do. You can stay in touch through Skype, phone and if he/she lives nearby you can meet up. A study partner is someone whom you discuss important topics, who lifts up your spirits when you feeling low and with whom you can share your day to day gossip. That in itself was the most entertaining part of the preparation. I will give you a few examples of the types of study partner you may come across

#### **1. Wannabe American**

This is the first study partner I had approximately for 2 hours. He was such a pseudo know it all. He was basically from India. But



already he had Americanized his talking and god knows what else! When we were discussing and it was my turn to ask him a question, he asked me to make it as “DIRTY” as possible!! Probably watching a lot of those western flicks ain't he matey ;)

WTH was my first and last reaction. Needless to tell, he was neither able to answer the question or impress me. That was the first and last time I saw of him ☺

## 2. Clueless Babe/ Dude

Yup. There are some people who don't know the ABC about the exam and yet keep on posting in forums for study partners! They are too lazy to even find out what USMLE stands for! I had one partner like this. She was from Mongolia and was totally clueless. And Dumb. She asked me once what does USMLE stand for (No kidding). I was too much in a shock to even reply ☺



## 3. Naughty Jane.... Or Jack ☺

Initially I thought this was a myth. But seriously guys. These USMLE forums asking for study partners is nothing short of dating sites. I had many encounters and things can get real kinky out there. Though they claim to be studying for USMLE they certainly are not. So if you are not careful, you may eventually end up studying everything else other than USMLE. There is no need to specifically mention about guys because 99% of them think alike. Its easy to catch a guy, difficult to get a good one ☺



## 4. I am Robot

This is the most common kind of study partner you will encounter. They are the kind who claim that they want only the best study partner and concentrate only on studies. Expect to be dumped by them cause they are fickle like rain in summer. And it really doesn't work out because they are always on the lookout for a better partner and usually they are left with none ☺



## 5. Drama Queen/King

Yup. These are the emotionally needy and insecure kind. Expect them to fall in and out of love a hundred times and constantly crib about how their life sucks and nobody wants them. There was this girl from Canada I think and within 2 days of talking she was constantly bitching about her boyfriend and her future in laws!! Two hours she went on how she doesn't trust him and how she thinks that he is cheating on her which included mailing





me all their personal mails and chats. I don't know who you are dude. But I salute your patience in managing such a hag bag 😊

There are so many other kinds you can come across. I just mentioned the most common ones. You also have procastrinators, fly by nights, crazies and so on and so forth!

My study partner was/is truly a gem. I created a fake account on orkut ( I was not going to let strangers into my personal details in my original account now was I!!) and that's how I got in touch with her. She was already hooked up with another guy so there were no sparks flying. And it was nice. A fine balance b/w emotional support and serious studies and discussion and it was an awesome exp. And no, I am not giving out her name. I still need her for my remaining steps.

How we went about studying? Initially we both used to mark out the topics we needed to study and then revise it online on Skype and ask each other questions. But this was very time consuming and also since my speed of reading was quite fast I was getting bogged down. Our basic problem is that we were not able to sit and concentrate. So we worked out a method where we will be online in front of each other studying our respective subjects and occasionally asking each other doubts or just exchanging plain old gossip once in a while 😊



And it worked out beautifully. Sure we have had our differences. And sure like most girls she used to speak about herself 80% of the times and never considered herself wrong ;) But, she was patient with me, cheered me up when I was low and celebrated with me when I reached small milestones 😊

So here in a nutshell is a list of what to expect and what not to from a study partner

1. Most important. Your study partner is NOT YOU. He/she is an independent individual with their own ways of doing things, respect that.
2. Selecting a partner is a trial and error method. It will take time to find one who will vibe with you and who you can put with and vice versa. Once you find one, don't let go of that person.
3. If it's a partner from the opposite sex, expect sparks to fly if you both are single or in some cases even if 1 of you are. Just don't lose focus on what the main goal is in the first place.
4. Your partner has their own choices. You must respect them and not impose yourself on them
5. Be supportive. This exam is not only physically and mentally draining but is also an emotional roller coaster. So there will be mood swings and occasional outbursts from both sides. Be mature, deal with it and move on.



6. Try to select a study partner who is in the same time zone as you and whom you can occasionally call. Skype works fine. But with a crappy internet connection it makes things difficult. And sometimes its just nice to hear another persons voice.
7. If things are not working out for you, you don't have to stick on to it. Move on and keep on going. Remember, it's great if you make friends along the way but not at the expense of neglecting your studies. At the same time, don't be fickle and make snap decisions. Some things can be dealt with tactfully. Its only when you think that it's no longer possible that you must call it quits.

## **RELAXATION:**

**I**ts long, tiring and many a time it's boring. The brain is a machine and if it doesn't get rest it will eventually give out. It's very essential to have a minimum of 6 hours sleep. Many a time, you will feel that you don't have sufficient time to catch up with all the revision. Still it's absolutely necessary to have your relaxation time.

I followed a simple rule which I learnt from my Western friends. I studied 5 days a week at 14hrs a day routine. Then the weekend was a freak out time! Saturdays were reserved for movies, clubbing, booze, ogling and picking up beautiful ladies, partying and in short terms just sweating out the stress of the previous 5 days ☺ Sunday was for sleeping late, laundry, cooking and just lazing around. Cooking is a great stress buster for me at least.



If I was at home, the only way of relaxing was movies, novels, internet chatting and phoning up to catch up with past events with friends ☺ no wild nights when at home ☺



SO, whatever suits you, just do it. You should take care not to burn yourself out. Especially it's possible to get saturated and tired just before your exam and that will bring your scores down! Don't think that taking a couple of hours off will reduce your studying time. Au contraire, a refreshed brain will get double the work done if you don't take a break.



Sometimes its just best to take a short trip. I did. Visited small, scenic beautiful places around the place I was. It was such a mind refresher ☺

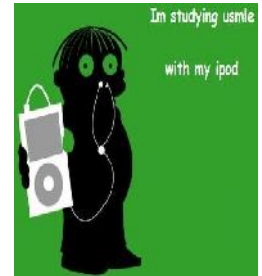
## **MISC TIPS:**

**W**ell some small tips before I head towards how I prepared. I am a tea and coffee addict. So there was plenty of those. Some of those whom I know never used to take such stimulant beverages in the first place!! Red bull sucks and Gatorade is absolute

muck!! Have a healthy diet. Plenty of protein and fluids. Avoid sugary stuff. And yes once in a while do indulge those taste buds ☺

People have different studying techniques. I am more of a day kind guy. Plus I don't take naps in the afternoon. Many people study well into the night. In the actual USMLE you can choose your exam in the afternoon or morning slot. So try to adjust your study schedule so that your sleep pattern gets adjusted to the exam slot so that you can be fresh and at optimum performance.

People have many idiosyncrasies while studying. Mine was to listening music when studying. Yours may be different. Just because you are studying for USMLE doesn't mean that you have to change your way of studying. Stick to your traditional way of studying. It's just an exam ☺



## **MY PREPARATION:**

**N**ow let me give you a gist of how I went about studying ☺

I started my preparation in March 2010. Since I had to make money for my step I joined as a GP in a small hospital in Kerala. The job was not hectic but was kinda draining. So during my working hours, I used to watch the Kaplan videos and read the notes and annotate them accordingly. It was a bit lengthy and it took me around 2 months to get through the first round.

Before I started off my second round, I took my first aid and divided it into various sections, punched holes into them and put them into a file binder somewhat like in the picture. The reason for this is very simple. As the exam time approaches you need easy access to your notes and it's not possible to always go through Kaplan. Also Kaplan is quite extensive and it will eat into your precious time during the revision period. At the same time the information given in FA is highly condensed and insufficient for the USMLE. What you actually need is a combination of them both together!



So, during my second reading I began to jot down important points from Kaplan to FA in the relevant sections. It may seem quite a waste of time in the beginning. But trust me. It's the best decision you will ever make. Dividing it into sections gives you the options of adding pages which can be tagged with the relevant section. Makes it easy to look up the important points when you are reading and helps you to keep all notes in an easily accessible space ☺

So that's what I did in my second round. Went again through my Kaplan notes and accordingly added points and notes to my FA. This process took approximately another month. I was studying around 6-8 hours intermittently.

After my second reading was over I started on my weak subjects. I began reading Road Map to neuroanatomy, biochemistry and BRS behavioral. During my working hours I was listening to

goljan audio and reading his notes. And intermittently I was solving the Kaplan Qbook. This took another month.

By this time, I felt I had made sufficient money to cover all my expenses. So I packed my bags and moved to Manipal. It was a typical bachelor set up. My friends were working so they used to leave in the morning and be back in the evening. So there was no disturbance and I soon adjusted myself there.

Now my regular schedule was somewhat like this.

- Wake up at 9 am
- Sit to study by 10 am
- Lunch at 1pm
- Relax with a serial or movie for an hour
- Restart at 3pm
- Tea break and shower at 5pm after exercise
- Questions from 6pm to 9pm
- Dinner and night stroll till 11 pm
- Back to studies from 10 pm till u feel damn sleepy which used to be generally around 2-3 a.m

Of course intermittent breaks used to be there like shopping for groceries, cleaning up my room, call from girl friend/s, power cuts etc etc. But most of the times I tried my best to stick to this schedule.

After I came back to Manipal I started doing offline UW and Kaptest. I generally used to do them in the afternoon or when I was at my sleepest. The explanations were quite lengthy but useful and my binder slowly kept on increasing in size ☺ I was doing the questions subject-wise and was referring other sources or bugging my SP when I was not able to understand a particular point.

It took me about 45 days to go through offline UW and Kaptest. I then decided to give offline Form 1 NBME. Since its offline you won't get a proper score prediction. I got 155/200 and was quite cheerful ☺

Then I took UW online for 1 month. It was a mistake. I should have taken it for 2 months as it would have given me more time to revise. I gave the first mock exam and it predicted my

USMLE score as 145!!! Crap. My first reality check. I needed it. I was beginning to take the exam too lightly.

So I began diligently solving the questions. A small word of caution. At the beginning you will get low scores. Don't be bogged down. Everybody faces the same problem. Just stick to it. Your scores will improve.

My review chart was showing persistently low scores in pathophysiology and biostats. So in addition to doing UW questions I also read BRS physiology and High Yield Biostatistics. Both excellent books. The molecular biology questions were also tough, but since I had read Road map to biochemistry I did reasonably well in it.

So this went on for another month or so. In b/w all this I had to correct my application, go to my college situated 800kms away to get it signed by my princi and by the time it was all done it was way past December.

By this time I was dangerously running low on cash and was tired of eating my own cooking ☺ so I packed my stuff and got back home.

After getting back home I did my NBME form 4 online. I thought I did reasonably well. But the exam felt otherwise! I got 396 which roughly translates into 195 as the actual score in USMLE.

I was stunned for a while. My exam was booked at the beginning of March and I didn't know where else I was going wrong! I took some time off. Had a great dinner. Watched a comedy flick. Then I sat down and went through the offline form to see where I was making my mistakes.

I then postponed my exam to the end of March and decided that I was going to give the exam come what may. I subscribed to online kaptest for 2 months. I started solving questions at the rate of 8-10 hours per day. And the remaining time was spent strengthening the weak topics. I started making a list of topics I was repeatedly screwing up and then made small post it notes and started plastering it around my room.

After 2 weeks I gave my NBME form 7 since I wanted to see where in the name of Davy Jones was I going wrong. I got 550 ie 216 in USMLE. I got 39 wrong. That sure boosted up my confidence and I started feeling all is well ☺

2 weeks before the exam I took NBME form 5. I scored 610 !! yeah. Awesome. I was peaking at the right moment and was loving it.

In the final month of my prep I was doing almost only questions non-stop. A week before my exam I was quickly revising and going through my notes I had made in the beginning. In addition I was revising my questions. 4 days before the exam I took NBME form 6. I scored 600!! Nice. I knew I was ready for the exam ☺



## **MY EXAM:**

**W**hew, the exam day finally came. I had a reasonably good night's sleep. My exam was scheduled in the afternoon slot and based on that I had adjusted my daily schedule. I went through a few notes like the development milestones, layers of the abdomen, classification of viruses etc. Had a hearty breakfast and followed it with a cool shower. Said my prayers and packed my lunch. Consisted basically of cheese and tomato sandwiches, a bottle of orange juice, a bottle of cold water and plenty of chocolate bars.

Since the prometric centre was quite far from my home, I left early. Reached with about half an hour to spare. Had a mug of hot coffee from the nearby barista and I entered my center.

Took about 15 min for all the biometrics and checking and I was finally seated in front of my computer. I said a short prayer and started.

Time management was never a problem for me. At home I used to get a block done in less than 30 min. I just don't know how I do it. I just do. If I tried to slow myself down then more questions used to get wrong!!!

So I started off. The first 2 blocks were pretty decent enough. A healthy mixture of questions across all subjects. I then took a break. Just to stretch my legs and wash my face. Took a couple of sandwiches, a sip of juice and water and I was back. Did another 2 blocks. Again repeated the same break procedure. Another 2. Another break. The final block was really horrible. Most of them questions I had never even heard of!!! Still I put on a brave face and did them to the best of my abilities.

Since I had plenty of time to spare after my blocks, I filled in the feedback form and came out after 4 hours of exam writing ☺

Overall the exam was pretty balanced. Frankly speaking I don't remember any question they asked because once it was done I mentally blocked all thoughts of USMLE from my mind till the result date ☺

## **POST-EXAM**

**F**rankly speaking post-exam I had a severe bursting headache! All the adrenaline drain I guess. So I took a strong pain killer and just went to sleep. I was somewhat composed during the 3 weeks I had to wait for my results. I knew I did all that I could do and had now left everything in the almighty's hand.

I watched a ton of movies. I have a 1 TB hard disk that's full and there was so much yet to be seen. I saw the entire season of LOST in 10days (too much hyped btw!!). Played games, updated

my laptop, met up with friends to catch up with the latest gossip. Anything, to keep my mind away from USMLE ☺

## RESULTS

**G**enerally it takes 3-8 weeks for the results to come. Most of the time it comes on a Wednesday. Mine came exactly after 21 days and I was not really expecting the result! My score was 256/99 ☺ Who says hard work doesn't pay ☺ And the person who was the happiest of all was my girlfriend.. Worth all the effort I put in!!

## SUMMARY

**F**inally to summarize all that I spoke of

- ✓ Be sure that this is what you want.
- ✓ You need to work hard like never before.
- ✓ Keep a belief system in place.
- ✓ Be prepared for negative comments and peer pressure.
- ✓ Try to get hold of a good study partner.
- ✓ Have all the adequate study materials ready before you start. Not too much. Not too less.
- ✓ Plan your study carefully and try to stick to it.
- ✓ Don't change the style of study you are familiar with
- ✓ Eat a healthy diet, have adequate sleep and do try to exercise once in a while.
- ✓ Keep yourself always positive. Don't let yourself get bogged down. Be confident. **YOU CAN DO IT!**
- ✓ Do give yourself occasional breaks. Remember, the brain is a machine. It does need rest.
- ✓ Apply in time for your exam.
- ✓ Give your exam when you feel confident enough.
- ✓ On the day of exam don't panic. **YOU KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS.** Just stay calm and you will figure it out.
- ✓ Once the exam is over just enjoy yourself. Your hardwork will be rewarded!!!

That's all from my side guys. Just remember. These are just things that I have found helpful. Do take the points which best suit you. What worked for me need not work for you. Feel free to share this around with your friends or others preparing!

If you have any doubts or clarifications do email me at [bassatom@gmail.com](mailto:bassatom@gmail.com) and I will try to help you out. Please don't ask for any books and/or qbanks because

- a. I have a very crappy data card connection and it will take me ages to upload them.
- b. I don't know where I stored them once my exams got over.

I now proceed to my Step 2 preparation. And thank you for patiently going through my rambling  
☺

