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A doctor, wearing a white masks and an overall, lays on the ground holding signs as several ... More physicians stage suicides during an action to denounce the problem of doctor burnout on February 18, 2014 near the Health Ministry in Paris. AFP PHOTO / KENZO TRIBOUILLARD (Photo credit should read KENZO TRIBOUILLARD/AFP via Getty
Images)AFP via Getty Images All physicians practicing medical Licensing Exams (USMLE), which consists of the Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK), and Step 3 exams. Prior to January 26 of this year, all three exam grades were
reported as a numeric score in addition to the designation pass or fail. Since January 26th, the USMLE and its sponsors, the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME) and the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), have decided to forego a numeric grade for the Step 1 exam, making the score designated only as pass or fail. The reason for
the change? According to Kevin Jubbal, founder of Med School Insiders, the change occurred to improve the well-being of medical students and decrease the stress and anxiety of students surrounding the exam. According to the 2018 National Resident Matching Program's Program Director Survey, the USMLE Step 1 score was the number one factor
used when deciding which candidate to offer an interview for residency training (post-graduate training that occurs for each medical school). This test, often taken between the second and third years of medical school, aims to confirm minimal competency for licensure by testing fundamentals of the
basic clinical sciences that are taught in the pre-clinical school. It is of no surprise that many medical school graduation. Has the change to pass/fail of the USMLE Step 1 done what it was intended to do-namely
decrease stress and anxiety in medical students? According to the 2021 National Resident Matching Program's Program Director Survey, 94% of residency programs require a numeric score on the USMLE Step 2 CK exam before offering interviews to candidates. According to another study, many residency programs now consider the USMLE Step 2
CK as the primary factor when considering which medical students to offer interviews for residency training. The stress and anxiety many medical students feel has simply shifted from the Step 2 CK exam. In other words, the USMLE Step 2 CK exam is the new Step 1, when considering medical student well-being and mental
health. According to a study in JAMA Network Open, 50% of medical students, the future caregivers and first responders
that will care for you and your loved ones. How can we expect future physicians to master clinical medicine and care for the medical student candidates for residency.
According to data from an article in Academic Medicine, Black and Latino medical students are more likely to score lower and/or fail all three USMLE exams when compared to White students. The reason- downstream effect of decades of systemic racism whereby they are provided fewer resources and opportunities to succeed and excel in academics
Consequently, it is much more difficult for underrepresented minorities to receive interview offers in the specialty of their choice when graduating medical students. MORE FROM FORBES ADVISOR The USMLE, NBME, and FSMB have a real opportunity to promote medical student and physician well-being as well as
racial equity by addressing scoring on physician licensing exams. Just as they made the Step 1 pass/fail, they must make all USMLE exams pass/fail. This would undoubtedly reduce the enormous stress and anxiety medical students face during their arduous years in school. Furthermore, underrepresented students will perhaps have a fairer shot at
pursuing their dream specialties after graduating. Standardized tests are merely one metric and measure for success. Eliminating numeric scores on the USMLE will force residency programs to make a more holistic review of prospective candidates. Some medical schools are already doing this for medical school admissions. At the University of
Maryland School of Medicine, the admissions committee performs holistic screening deemphasizing standardized scores; to name a few initiatives. Residency programs throughout the country should follow suit when considering future trainees in
their programs. The USMLE, NBME, and FSMB as well as the hundreds of medical training programs throughout the country must start taking care of medical students, who we will all rely upon to take care of medical training programs throughout the country must start taking care of medical students, who we will all rely upon to take care of medical students, who we will all rely upon to take care of medical students.
to our use of cookies to deliver and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our
Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. By accepting all cookies, you agree to our use of cookies to deliver and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the effectiveness of
advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. Pursuing a career in medicine is no easy feat, primarily due to the rigorous nature of medical license exams. These exams serve as
gatekeepers, ensuring candidates are thoroughly prepared to step into the medical field as competent physicians. Aspiring doctors often face a tough road, filled with long hours of study and stress. Medical license exams like the USMLE, MRCP, and PLAB are infamous for their difficulty, requiring not just knowledge but also stamina and persistence.
Each test is unique in its structure and challenges, demanding a comprehensive understanding and strategic preparation. This exploration into the world of medical licensing exams aims to provide a roadmap for future physicians. By understanding what makes these exams tough and adopting efficient study techniques, candidates can approach their
preparation with confidence and clarity. Understanding the Structure of Medical License ExamsThe world of medical exams is vast and varied, each designed to assess the competency of aspiring doctors in distinct ways. These exams not only test your knowledge but also scrutinize your ability to apply it in practical settings. Starting with the United
States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), this multi-step exam is known for its grueling and comprehensive nature. Taken in three parts, the USMLE tests candidates over several aspects of medical practice. Step 1 focuses on understanding and applying basic sciences, while Step 2 (Clinical Knowledge and Clinical Skills) assesses clinical
sciences through both written exams and hands-on patient interactions. Finally, Step 3 evaluates one's ability to manage a patient in a real-world, unsupervised environment. Across the Atlantic, the Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians (MRCP) in the UK presents its own significant challenges. Divided into three sections, Part 1 and Part 2
test medical knowledge and clinical experiences through written exams that demand critical thinking and in-depth understanding. The PACES (Practical expertise comes under scrutiny through observed patient evaluations. The
Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) test is another critical exam for foreign doctors wishing to practice in the UK. PLAB is divided into two parts: a written test and an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE). The latter involves a series of stations where candidates must demonstrate their medical knowledge and
communication skills in simulated scenarios. This structure aims to mirror real-life challenges that doctors may face in the UK, ensuring they are prepared for local practices and patient interactions. According to Dr. John Carter, an esteemed reviewer in The Journal of Medical Education, "These exams are not just a test of medical knowledge but a
trial of resilience and adaptability, demanding a balance of theoretical understanding and practical prowess. "Other countries have their versions, like the Australian Medical Council (AMC) exams and the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (MCCQE), each uniquely tailored to their healthcare systems. The AMC Clinical Exam, for
example, requires candidates to tackle clinical problems presented in a realistic format, offering different hurdles compared to written tests. As a part of exam preparation, understanding the specific format and focus areas of these tests is crucial for success. Knowing whether to sharpen diagnostic skills or enhance patient communication techniques
can help strengthen one's weak spots. This intricate design of medical license exams is not just about sifting through academic prowess; it assesses one's readiness to make critical decisions that affect human lives. The structure aims to reflect real-life medical scenarios, testing not just what you know, but how effectively you can put that knowledge to
use. With such a framework, these exams become a rite of passage for future physicians, preparing them not just to be doctors in title, but in capability and action. Why the USMLE (United States Medical Licensing Examination) is often recognized as the gold standard for medical licensing exams worldwide, and for good
reasons. One of the foremost reasons it stands out is its comprehensive approach to evaluating a candidate's ability to apply knowledge, concepts, and principles crucial in health and disease care. The USMLE is divided into three distinct steps, each focusing on different aspects of medical education and practice. Step 1 tests the examinee's grasp of
basic sciences concepts, Step 2 evaluates clinical knowledge and skills, and Step 3 assesses whether the examinee can apply medical knowledge and understanding of biomedical and clinical science to the practice of medicine without supervision. The rigor of this exam is a significant aspect of its distinctiveness. Each step spans over a day or two of
testing, with Step 1 including as many as 280 multiple-choice questions. It is not just the breadth of questions but also the depth, requiring not mere rote memory but the ability to apply complex concepts in situational medical problems. This setup ensures that only those with solid foundational knowledge qualify to proceed, maintaining high
standards within the medical field. The necessity for precise clinical judgment is another part of what makes the USMLE exceptionally challenging. As stated by Dr. Michael Barone, vice president for licensure programs at the National Board of Medical Examiners, "Our goal is to ensure that every physician possesses the knowledge, skills, and
attitudes essential for safe and effective patient care." Our goal is to ensure that every physician possesses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential function for international medical graduates (IMGs), who must clear
this hurdle to gain residency placements. The exam's impact is profound, influencing not only individual aspirations but also shaping the global healthcare workforce as it determines who enters the US medical systems. In fact, the USMLE is a pivotal criterion used by residency programs across the country to assess candidates. The scores attained in
these steps are often determinative, impacting partnership and specialization opportunities. This is why strategic preparation becomes indispensable, involving months or even years of planning and study. Statistics reveal just how challenging the USMLE can be. According to the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) and the National Board of
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challenging. The MRCP from the United Kingdom, the PLAB also in the UK, the AMC in Australia, and the MCCQE in Canada, all hold their reputation as rigorous medical exams that test the mettle of aspiring physicians. Let's first unpack what makes the MRCP such a formidable opponent for medical graduates. The Membership of the Royal Colleges
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more accessible in terms of content but brings its own challenges with its heavy focus on English proficiency and ethical understanding needed for effective communication in a global setting. The PLAB is developed with a two-part structure: a written assessment and a practical objective structured clinical examination (OSCE). This hands-on aspect
requires candidates to navigate clinical scenarios, emphasizing not just knowledge, but proficiency and confidence in procedural execution. Shifting geographies to Australian Medical Council (AMC) assessment stands as a two-stage exam comprised of a computer adaptive test and a clinical examination. The AMC instrument is
meticulous, pushing candidates to adapt to Australia's specific healthcare standards and practices. Its high medical standards succeed, benefiting the country's high medical standards. Meanwhile, Canada's MCCQE is unique in its integration of clinical skills evaluation with
theoretical knowledge. Spanning two parts, it evaluates candidates' abilities in diagnosing, managing patient cases, and integrating knowledge across varied contexts of general medicine. Consider this insight by Dr. John Timmins from the British Medical Journal: 'The most challenging aspect of international medicine exams is not just in their content
but in adapting one's preparation to the cultural and procedural nuances of each country. While anecdotal, quotes like these highlight the real trial faced by medical landscapes. These exams are more than mere tests of rote knowledge; they are intricate
assessments of a candidate's capacity to practice medicine with a deep understanding and adaptability to diverse healthcare settings across the globe. Effective Preparation StrategiesPreparing for medical exams such as the USMLE or MRCP requires more than just memorizing textbooks. It involves a well-rounded approach that combines consistent
study habits with practical application of knowledge. A key strategy is to create a study schedule that allocates specific time slots for each subject area, ensuring that all material is covered comprehensively. This helps in managing time effectively and reduces anxiety as the exam day approaches. To optimize learning, it is crucial to engage with varied
resources like peer-reviewed articles, medical forums, and interactive online modules. Another essential element of preparation is practicing with past exam papers and mock tests. These resources help in understanding the format and types of questions frequently asked in these challenging examinations. By doing so, candidates can identify their
weak areas, allowing them to focus extra effort on those topics. It's also beneficial to study in groups occasionally, as peer discussions can often introduce new perspectives or clarify doubts. Remember to incorporate regular breaks into your study sessions to avoid burnout; this not only refreshes the mind but also increases retention. "Success is no
accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing." - PeléThe use of visual aids and mnemonics can significantly enhance recall abilities. For instance, creating mind maps or flowcharts for complex processes or diseases can make the information more digestible and memorable. Many top
performers also recommend flashcards for quick revision sessions. Moreover, considering the vastness of the syllabus, separating critical information from supplementary details is invaluable and can be achieved by consulting with senior students or educators who have navigated these examinations. A holistic approach also includes maintaining
mental health support specifically designed for students facing high-stakes exams. Keeping a work-life balance not only contributes to a healthier study methods according to personal learning styles can substantially enhance efficiency
Some students find success through auditory methods, like listening to recorded lectures, while others benefit from teaching the material back to others. It's important to self-reflect periodically during the preparation phase to assess what's working and what isn't. With discipline, dedication, and diverse learning techniques, navigating these highly
competitive exams becomes a more achievable goal. Tips for Maintaining Mental Health During Exam PrepEmbarking on the journey of medical license exams brings more than just intellectual challenges. The intense pressure can have a profound impact on an aspiring physician's mental health. Balancing rigorous study schedules with personal well
being requires a proactive approach. One important strategy is creating a structured routine that includes regular breaks. It is essential to step away from the textbooks and stethoscopes occasionally, allowing the mind time to relax and reset. Integrating short, frequent breaks into your study schedule can improve focus and efficiency. Exercise plays
a significant role in sustaining mental health during this demanding time. Engaging in physical activity, even something as simple as a brisk walk, can reduce stress and improve mood. Exercise stimulates the release of endorphins, which are chemicals in the brain that act as natural mood lifters. Consistent physical activity not only decreases anxiety
levels but also enhances cognitive function, which is crucial when preparing for exams as challenging as the USMLE and MRCP. "The mind is just like a muscle—the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets and the more it can expand," said Idowu Koyenikan, a respected author on personal development. The importance of sleep cannot be overstated
Quality sleep is vital for memory consolidation and cognitive processing. While it may be tempting to pull all-nighters, this often leads to diminished returns. Aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Creating a serene bedtime routine, free from screens and study notes, can help establish a healthy sleep pattern. These habits ensure you're well-rested
and ready to tackle complex concepts and problem-solving tasks the following day. Nourishing your body with healthy, balanced meals is another cornerstone of mental health. Consuming a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains can fuel the brain and support concentration. Dehydration is a common, often overlooked stressor
that can lead to fatigue and irritability. Keeping a water bottle on hand as you study can counteract this, helping maintain energy levels throughout the day. Including nuts, seeds, and dark chocolate in your snacks can provide the brain with essential nutrients. Mindfulness and mediation practices also offer significant benefits. These techniques allow
you to cultivate patience, focus, and presence, reducing overwhelming feelings of stress. Just 10 to 15 minutes of daily meditation can make a notable difference in your overall mental health. Choosing a designated space for meditation and practicing control over your breathing can help ease anxiety related to the pressing demands of medical exams
Consider apps or online resources to guide your practice, making mindfulness a simple addition to your routine. Pursuing a career in medical license exams. These exams serve as gatekeepers, ensuring candidates are thoroughly prepared to step into the medical field as competent
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strategic preparation becomes indispensable, involving months or even years of planning and study. Statistics reveal just how challenging the USMLE can be. According to the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) and the National Board of Medical Examiners (NBME), the average passing rate for Step 1 in recent years has been around 95% for
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particularities of the US medical environment. Therefore, the USMLE is considered a triumph for those who pass and fulfills dreams of many eager to practice medicine in one of the most developed medical frameworks globally. Understanding this daunting challenge means knowing what to expect. The exam smashes the limits of a textbook, pulling
clinicians and students into a realm where practical skills, quick thinking, and profound knowledge intertwine. With relentless focus and meticulous preparation, mastering the USMLE might unlock numerous opportunities within the healthcare industry for aspiring physicians worldwide. In essence, it stands as a monumental challenge, yet it is a vital
step that ensures the excellence and safety of medical practice. Comparing Other Notorious Medical ExamsWhen we dive into the world of medical licensing internationally, several exams besides the well-known USMLE prove to be notably challenging. The MRCP from the United Kingdom, the PLAB also in the UK, the AMC in Australia, and the
MCCQE in Canada, all hold their reputation as rigorous medical exams that test the mettle of aspiring physicians. Let's first unpack what makes the MRCP such a formidable opponent for medical graduates. The Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians (MRCP) is tailored for those wishing to pursue a specialist physician role in the UK. Divided
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quotes like these highlight the real trial faced by medical graduates—stretching beyond familiar shores and immersing in a spectrum of global medical landscapes. These exams are more than mere tests of rote knowledge; they are intricate assessments of a candidate's capacity to practice medicine with a deep understanding and adaptability to
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vastness of the syllabus, separating critical information from supplementary details is invaluable and can be achieved by consulting mental and physical well-being. Regular exercise, adequate sleep, and healthy eating habits play a
crucial role in keeping stress at bay and boosting cognitive function. Candidates should not hesitate to seek emotional support or counseling if they find the pressure overwhelming. Nowadays, numerous apps and platforms offer guided meditation and mental health support specifically designed for students facing high-stakes exams. Keeping a work-
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a simple addition to your routine. Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. By accepting all cookies, you agree to our use of cookies and measure the effectiveness of
advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. Becoming a licensed doctor is no cakewalk. You've probably heard horror stories of medical students cramming endless nights to clear their
exams. Ever wondered which medical license exam tops the list for being the toughest? We're talking about those daunting tests that separate the wheat from the CNAILE (United States Medical Licensing Examination), a beast of its own spanning three
grueling steps. Across the pond, the UK presents the MRCP (Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians) examinations. Closer to home for me in Australia, it's the combination of vast content, understanding clinical
scenarios, and sometimes, just the sheer pressure of it all. Imagine needing to know everything you've ever learned, then applying it to hypothetical situations under the clock! It's not just about knowing stuff; it's about thinking on your feet. Understanding Medical License ExamsSo, what's the deal with medical license exams? These are critical
gateways for anyone who dreams of practicing medicine. They ensure that doctors are not just theoretically competent but also practically sound. But let's unpack the various frameworks. In the United States, we've got the USMLE. This examination series includes three steps, each of which has a specific focus. Step 1 covers basic medical sciences
Step 2 assesses clinical knowledge and skills, and Step 3 evaluates whether the examinee can apply medical knowledge in a real-world setting. The UK isn't far behind with the MRCP, which consists of three parts, demanding deep knowledge of the principles of medicine and clinical assessment skills. Candidates have to demonstrate competence in
clinical diagnosis and understanding of management. In Australia, aspiring doctors take on the AMC exams, which assess knowledge and clinical skills at a level equivalent to that required of newly qualified Australian medical graduates. The AMC process involves a multiple-choice exam and a clinical exam, which mimics real-life healthcare
scenarios. If you're curious about the intensity, let's throw in some numbers. In the US, preparing for Step 1 of the USMLE can take up to 2 or even 3 months full-time, with students often putting in around 7-9 hours a day studying. Why So Intense? These exams are designed to separate those who truly grasp medical concepts from those who don't yet
The emphasis is on problem-solving and application rather than rote memorization. The clinical parts assess how quickly and accurately you can think on your feet. In a way, it's a taste of real medical practice. And while these tests are hard, they're necessary. Doctors hold lives in their hands, and these exams help ensure that they're up to the
challenge. What Makes Them Tough? Alright, so what exactly makes these medical license exams such a tough nut to crack? It's not just one thing. It's like they threw every difficult component into a single test. Let's dissect this, shall we?Vast SyllabusFirst up, the sheer volume of content is crazy. Picture this: you're expected to master everything
from basic anatomy to complex clinical conditions. The amount of material covered is huge, and for many, that's the first hurdle. It's not about rote memorization; you've got to understand, digest, and apply what you've learned. The
questions are designed to put you in the shoes of a practicing doctor. Can you diagnose this patient? Which treatment should be prioritised? That's the real kicker! Time PressureAnd then, there's time management. You get a limited amount of time to answer each question, pushing your analytical skills to the limit. When you have mere minutes to
make potentially life-impacting decisions, that's pressure! Success RatesWanna talk about stats? Take the USMLE Step 1: pass rate often reported around 54% for U.S. students, but it drops significantly for international candidates—talk about stats? Take the USMLE Step 1: pass rate often reported around 54% for U.S. students, but it drops significantly for international candidates—talk about stats? Take the USMLE Step 1: pass rate often reported around 54% for U.S. students, but it drops significantly for international candidates—talk about stats? Take the USMLE Step 1: pass rate often reported around 54% for U.S. students, but it drops significantly for international candidates—talk about stats? Take the USMLE Step 1: pass rate often reported around 54% for U.S. students, but it drops significantly for international candidates—talk about states?
for Part 1.Emotional and Physical TollNot to mention the emotional rollercoaster. The process is long, isolating, and frankly, exhausting. Many test-takers describe it as mentally draining, and the added pressure of knowing your future career hinges on these exams doesn't help. So there you have it. All these factors boil down to one heck of a
challenging exam experience. But those who've conquered it often say that preparation, perseverance, and a pinch of resilience are your best allies. Tips for Tackling the hardest medical license exam can feel overwhelming, but don't worry. With the right approach, it's possible to conquer those intimidating questions. Here
are some practical tips to help you navigate these challenging assessments.1. Start Early and Make a PlanKick off your preparation well in advance. Outline a study schedule that spreads your workload over a realistic timeline. Here's a simple rule of thumb: consistency matters more than cramming. Allocate daily time slots and stick to them.2.
Understand the Exam FormatEvery exam has its own nuanced structure, from multiple choice questions to clinical vignettes. Get familiar with the format, so there are no surprises on exam day. Dive into practice tests to hone your test-taking skills.3. Prioritize High-Yield TopicsFocus on topics that are frequently tested. Use review books or online
resources that highlight key concepts. Attend workshops or webinars that provide insights into exam hotspots. Don't get lost in the weeds. High-yield material will keep you on track. 4. Join Study Groups Discussing challenging topics with peers can enhance understanding. Study groups create accountability and provide opportunities for different
perspectives. These discussions might just reveal the golden nugget you need. 5. Take Care of Your Well-beingDon't forget to rest and rejuvenate. Exercise, eat well, and ensure you're getting ample sleep. Your brain performs best when your body is well-maintained. Remember, burnout doesn't help anyone ace a competitive exam. 6. Leverage
TechnologyApps and online platforms offer interactive learning experiences. Use them for quizzes, flashcards, and quick reviews. Some apps also allow you to track your progress over time. Their insights could provide new perspectives
and strategies. A mentor can offer you personalized advice to hone your approach. By mixing these strategies, you'll build a strong foundation to tackle even the hardest exams confidently. Remember, every licensure journey is unique, but with persistence and smart studying, you can reach the finish line. Stories from Those Who've PassedEven
 wondered what it's really like to conquer one of the hardest medical license exams? Real stories from successful candidates peel back some of the mystery—and offer much-needed inspiration for those in the trenches. From Frustration to Victory: Sarah's Journey with the USMLES arah, a recent success story with the USMLE, admits she wasn't alway
confident. The night before her second step, she was on edge. "I felt like my brain might explode," she laughs. What made the difference? A regimented study schedule and leveraging practice exams. "The practice exams. "The practice tests mirrored the real thing. They forced me to think critically." Fun fact: Sarah discovered a curious trend. While coffee seemed like a
must-have, switching to green tea gave her better focus during early morning sessions. Cracking the AMC ExamsTom's path in Australia was no less challenging. "The AMC exams demand that you understand the Australian medical system
deeply," he notes, emphasizing his weakness early on. His strategy? Engage with local study groups. "Discussing tricky topics with peers made a world of difference." Tom also recommends honing practical skills. He spent extra hours practical skills. He spent extra hours practical skills. He spent extra hours practical skills.
StoryExamPass Rate (%)USMLE Step 194USMLE Step 194USMLE Step 194USMLE Step 298AMC Clinical60The numbers show it: USMLE might have high pass rates, but the pressure and competition remain fierce. AMC offers its own set of challenges, particularly due to the focus on clinical skills. These stories underline a common thread: while the exams are no walk in the park,
strategic preparation and personal resilience make success possible. Whether it's making the most of competitive exams or learning from peers, every story carries a nugget of wisdom for those on their journey. In this blog post: Combine effective learning strategies Maximize your productivity setup Study with peers —virtually or in real life First of
all: take a deep breath. Remember that you've been through five years of gruelling med school. You've taken countless exams, survived numerous OSCEs, and finished at least one revalida or two. You're here. You've made it this far. Then get to work. (Whip out your study planner, make a spreadsheet tracker, or just ready your pens and post-its.)
Disclaimer: This isn't an end-all or be-all guide to making it through the PLE. It's more of a collection of ways you can boost your review. Reading and taking notes are great for understanding material, but they are less than ideal tools for long-term retention and test-taking finesse. Combining and staggering multiple learning strategies can
significantly increase the yield of your review. Here are some of the tricks that worked for me. Effective learning strategies, as discussed in First Aid for the USMLE, 31st ed. (2021). Here's how I applied some of them. Review Strategies, as discussed in First Aid for the USMLE, 31st ed. (2021).
and a mobile app. As a flashcard app, Anki leverages the power of active recall and spaced learning. Instead of "going in one ear and out the other", repeated retrieval forces your brain to make stronger connections between difficult concepts and easier must-knows. Read my previous post featuring Anki: ASMPH MD/MBA: What I've been up to Why is
it helpful? I've gone on a very long tangent about the Anki app before. I love flashcard apps because they do most of the prep work for me: the algorithm figures out how often a card should turn up, there are pre-made decks for boards review material. A
single page of a boards review handout can contain up to 50 nuggets of information. At the end of each day, you'll be synthesizing and making notes; it's much more efficient to synthesize with a setup that allows you to practice test later. And compared to physical flashcards, using an app is definitely the "smarter not harder" way to study. Where to
start? This is a link to a database of Anki decks made by Medical Study Zone. Though most of them are for designed for the USMLE, there's a lot of overlap with the PLE. Certain review centers and study groups also have decks made based on local review materials. Hit me up if you're curious! And if you're still in the first couple of years in medical
school, I highly encourage using Anki or similar flashcard apps to prepare for comprehensive exams. Learning how to make questions or prompts can make you a more savvy better test-taker. You also realize which pieces of information are actually important and testable. The boards-prep decks also contain up to tens of thousands of cards, so it's
never too early to start. (Though I don't recommend board-level cards until late second year or third year, when pathology is better complemented by patient encounters.) P.S. A quick Google tells me that some competitors to check out are RemNote and SuperMemo. Enjoy! Retrieval is king. If you're not into flashcards, at least spend a few hours per
day working on some review questions. I personally enjoyed going through BRS Biochemistry and Snell Review. For the rest, I put my trust in some not-so-legit practice exams (I also liked digitally filling out the little boxes). . Review Strategy #2: Pomodoro Technique What is it? Pomodoro Technique is a time management system that allows people to
stay focused while finding time to refresh. After planning your goals or tasks per session, work for a couple of pomodoros before taking a long break. A Pomodoro can be 25 minutes of work with 5 minutes of rest, or 45-50 minutes of rest. My task tracker (ignore the pretentious schedule). This is essentially a snapshot of my
progress one month before the board exams. I did accomplish some things over the last four weeks of review, but definitely not enough to mark everything as green and done.. Why is it helpful? Let's face it: it's impossible to be focused 100% of the time. The body has a natural attention span limit. And even if you have the mental discipline of a monk,
rest can also help the mind solidify connections and store information in our memory banks. The Pomodoro technique gives structure during study sessions. It also gives you some time off to look forward to. Where to start? You can go old-school with actual physical Pomodoro timers for the aesthetic, or just set up a timer and some music on your
default phone apps. I am personally a big fan of "study with me" type of YouTube videos which come with built-in Pomodoro timers. Here are two of my favorite and most-visited channels: There's a wide variety of formats, music, and video styles on the Internet. Choosing which one suits you best is an adventure all on its own. Review Strategy #3:
Mnemonics What is it? Mnemonics are memory aid tools that aid information retention and retrieval, especially when dealing with very specific facts or large amounts of information. They can come in the form of an acronym, an image or funny phrase, or even a rhyme. A mnemonic that most people know is "SMART", which describes the
characteristics of a good goal. SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. Why is it helpful? Not all mnemonics are created equal, but really good ones can stick with you for a long time. I've been using the same mnemonics for carpal bones (Some Lovers Try Positions That They Can't Handle), retroperitoneal organs
(SADPUCKER) and points of cardiac auscultation (Always Pray To Mary) since first year medical school. Actively making your own memory aids is a challenge, but definitely a fun one! It's practically an art. Since self-made mnemonics can sometimes have more personal significance, they might be able to stay longer in your 'memory palace' (if you
have one). Or they may fail like this one. Short-term memory aids. Here's an example of some mnemonics I made which will definitely not be stored in my long-term memory. They're low quality, but they did the job and made me feel more confident about knowing a little bit of something about AEDs. I've also found mnemonics to be helpful in
incorporating concepts across different subjects. Where to start? Mnemonics are honestly everywhere. Review books such as First Aid for the USMLE Step 1 even highlight famous, almost-universal mnemonics made for key concepts. When you come across a difficult and dense concept, such as "which cancers have psamomma bodies?" or "what are
the adverse effects of lithium?", note them down. Then it's a simple matter of hitting Google with the keywords + "mnemonic". I personally made some mnemonics for the 2021 PLE. Some are a miss, but some, like the Bishop Score guide, can be a hit. I have a Twitter moment here. You can also check out my old visual memory aid for baby
developmental milestones from last year. At the end of the day, all that matters is finding a learning strategy that works for you. It might never be a perfect fit, but getting to tick off some of your review time, it's also about everything around
you —your desk, the music, your books, the apps, and more. Is updating your desk setup an example of "productive procrastination"? Maybe. Or maybe it's self-care. Music is a big part of studying. Some rare species can study in complete silence, but I personally prefer background music. Sometimes, I'm pretty content with the default music or white
noise in YouTube "study with me" videos. Other times, I prefer to blast some KPop to keep me hyped. The lack of discernible English words help; it's fun, but not too distracting. There are, amazingly, so many free study playlists on Spotify. This is one of the more focus-oriented playlists that I listened to over the last few days of boards review season.
I'm also a big fan of listening to dance albums. I used to dance (yes, dance) to music while answering Anki flashcards. Keeping active while reviewing is a good way to lessen lower back pain and to keep blood circulating. (It's definitely something that I try not to do in public, though). Thank you to my president, Ms. Nadine Lustre, for the vibes. . At
some point, I even dedicated at least 5-10 minutes of my study session just for figuring out my playlist. Naturally I shared some of the results on Twitter. today's 45/15 pomodoro playlist (aka an excuse to promote my go-to albums):1. Jackson Wang - Mirrors (22 min) + SB19 - Pagsibol (24 min)2. Arctic Monkeys - AM (42 min)3. Nadine Lustre -
Wildest Dreams (43 min)4. Taylor Swift - 1989 (49 min)feel free to share yours © — jari bot (@qudejari) July 27, 2021 Aside from music, the ambiance of a study location requires: Easily-accessible wall
sockets to power your devices Free wi-fi connection Well-lit seats with adequate indoor cooling Spacious location with only low levels of noise pollution Good value for money Sometimes it's Co-working spaces like KMC Solutions. Pre-pandemic, the ideal study spot would
have been dedicated rooms and hallway seats inside our campus. Or better yet, in the newly renovated ASMPH library. Frequent guests. If boards review season happened during the holidays instead, I bet I'd have the seasonal Starbucks planner by now.. KMC Solutions in the Podium, Ortigas, Pasig City. I honestly fell in love with the thought of co-
working spaces (too bad I'm not going full corporate or whatever). It's also one of the most exciting innovations offered at a discounted price (and free trial) by Pugad Agila. Even within my own home, I have a preference. I much prefer studying in our downstairs common table over my bedroom study. I get way less tempted to sleep when I'm in the
sala. Finally, a productivity setup isn't complete without ...a relaxation setup? It's important to surround yourself with ways to relax and take care of yourself. My suggestions include: Having a regular, dedicated coffee time (or tea or whatever snack floats your boat). It helps add structure to your life while keeping you energized. Leaving your
exercise equipment nearby. I kept my yoga mat unrolled in my room, so that I won't forget to squeeze in at least 15 to 30 minutes of stretches and core exercises per day. Ideally. Investing in skincare and aromatherapy. A nighttime routine where you can actively unwind for the day can do wonders for your disposition. It's a little bit like telling
yourself, "you've done enough, you're enough". Sleeping on time. I can't actually preach to the choir, since my sleeping hours until I could safely and freshly wake up at 4AM on day 1 of #PLE2021. Build an environment that makes you want to study. As
future physicians, we're all committed to a lifetime of continuous learning. But the way we review doesn't have to be boring or repetitive. Going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing when you're all going through hell isn't as depressing through hell isn't 
benefits to studying with a group. First of all, no man is an island. It's impossible to hit all of the must-knows in the PLE all by yourself. Even if you only find out by word-of-mouth from previous boardtakers and fellow students. Your classmate will
likely know one or three things that you've never heard of before. And you can also share something that will be worth their time to know as well. Win-win. Second, explaining concepts aid in retention. The "teachers" in our batch are some of our best performing students, likely because they're able to better comprehend and retain the material. I am
personally not inclined to teaching my peers (because I'm shy like that), but I've definitely been a student. Reviewing each other and sharing memory aids are both really good ways to study. It feels like guilt-free socializing. Tada, you're human again. Third, mutual encouragement comes from empathic connections. It's easy to bring yourself down all
by your lonesome, but much harder to lift yourself up. Being able to rant to friends going through the same uncertainties and struggles is cathartic. Even when it's only a "fake it 'til you make it" kind of encouragement, it still feels comforting. One of the best examples of this is the entire community of #PLE2021 on Twitter. People were coming
together to share study tips, words of encouragement, and even thinly-veiled rants online. I'm excited to follow their careers in the future. Bayanihan! Starbucks study date. Back when F2F duties were still a thing, you never know who you'd end up studying with at any of the
cafes or milk tea shops in the Ortigas area. [Sometimes I'd be lazy enough to just go to the Reserve branch beside my condo. But sometimes I'd make the effort to travel to Capitol Commons.]. Thank you to Faye and David. Aside from being 10/10 duty partners, they're also troves of funny reactions to the latest review material or gossip. And so on. I
think I'm sane largely thanks to our group chat. Finally, studying with a group allows for benchmarking is a commonly used tool in management. It's the process of comparing key metrics to understand where you need to improve or change. I've never been to a review center before (except for a 2-day weekend crash course for the
NMAT). But enrolling* in Topnotch was a huge eye-opener. I honestly do not think I could have gotten anywhere without the structure, review materials, and encouragement provided by the Topnotch support system. *We didn't actually enroll. All ASMPH students are automatically enrolled to this review center. We have a special class and
agreements and everything. As far as I understand it, many other medical graduates end up in "virtual classes" or groups composed of graduates from different schools. This is an example of how my grades were, one month before the boards. Because of how the PLE is graded (based on MPL), a score of 60-80 is already good in my opinion. Anything
higher than that is just bonus. Honestly, the things I learned during January to May (preseason) were forgotten by season 1 (June to August). And by the last leg (September to October), I was still learning new things. I'm not really sure whether I accumulated knowledge, or just passing familiarity with a wide breadth of topics. . Topnotch ranks the
people who take the diagnostic exams and provide color-coded "percentile rank". I had a high percentile during the very first diagnostic exam back in May (likely because I had time to review during my last few internship rotations). But my rank dipped noticeably by the baseline exams during June. To me, this meant that studying hard on your own
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isn't enough. If other people (ie your cohort during the exam), study smarter or better, then there's still definite room for improvement for you. After all, given the MPL system, it's really a matter of how much you know relative to the people sitting next to you during the PLE. Then again, there's absolutely NO WAY to predict what will come out in the board exams, so doing well in one particular practice quiz is not an accurate reflection of how you'll perform during the PLE itself. It's only a reflection of your effort. Keep your friends close to hype each other up, to motivate collective progress, and to ward off the mounting stress. It's one for all, all for one. Good luck with your preparations for the