Active Learning and Test Taking in the Health Sciences

- Mechanics of Test Taking
- Strategies for Multiple Choice Questions at the graduate and professional levels
- Doctors
- Test Analysis
Mechanics of Test Taking

Practice, Practice, Practice
- Level of proficiency/Reality (What do I want?)
- Time Management/Rate
- Time Management/Planning
- Knowledge is power (or maybe just a higher score) – What works, What does not
- Simulation of the Testing Environment

Pacing
- Note the total number of items on the exam or in the block
- Time per item
- Most productive strategy

Analyzing
- If possible, complete the questions that cover the content you know best
- If you are not penalized for guessing, choose B or C
Mechanics of Test Taking

- If given paper or a laminated page, write associations, mnemonics, mind maps, or brainstorm related to question material.

- If a question is written with a “NOT” or an “EXCEPT”, write the question number on the paper or page and place a big “F” by it. Place your pencil or marker in the hand that you do not write and keep it on the “F” until you have selected an answer.
Mechanics of Test Taking

- **Relaxation**
  - Practice positive self-talk and visualizations during preparation period
  - Practice relaxation techniques during preparation period

- **Checking**
  - If you feel more emotional (angry, frustrated, not as confident) about a question or questions, check the answers to those questions and the next few questions to ensure that the marked choice was your chosen answer
Strategies for Answering Test Questions

1. Cover the options/choices.

2. Read the last sentence FIRST.

3. Look for “doctors” (words that would change the meaning if deleted, often opposites, i.e., gain/loss, early/later, ab-/ad-, etc.).

4. Brainstorm what you DO know based on what is in the stem. What it makes you think of, What is related, etc.

Predict answer as though the question were a short-answer or open-ended question rather than multiple-choice.
Strategies for Answering Test Questions

5. Look at THREE (3) choices – get rid of at least one.

6. Continue this process uncovering one at a time until you have it down to two (2) possible answers.

7. Look at the two left. Think about HOW are they DIFFERENT. Is there one answer that is MORE correct because of a “doctor” in the question.

8. Select the BEST answer based on your ACTIVE analysis of the question.
Look for doctors.

Doctors according to The Princeton Review are:

words that when taken out of the question or the choices, change the question and subsequently the answer chosen.
Michael, age 3 years, was admitted to the emergency room after being rescued from a fire in his home. He is having difficulty breathing. An early sign of respiratory distress that you might observe in Michael is:
QUESTION

Michael, age 3 years, was admitted to the emergency room after being rescued from a fire in his home. He is having difficulty breathing. An early sign of respiratory distress that you might observe in Michael is”

The doctor in the question/stem is "early".
A sign of respiratory distress is Cyanosis but an *early* sign of respiratory distress is *increased* pulse rate. Cyanosis is a distracter.
EXAMPLE/PRACTICE
Before the Exam

- The morning of the exam, do 5-10 previously chosen questions for warm-up

- Use the 2-3 days prior to the exam for review and memorization.

- The day prior to the exam administration, study 3-4 hours of what you know that you know and then take the rest of the day and the evening off. Leave your home, go to a movie or do something distracting just not dangerous or coma-inducing.
Test Analysis

WHY was a question/s missed???

1. **Misreading** (i.e., reading efferent as afferent, independent as dependent...) Skipped over something important by reading too fast and/or making assumptions.

2. **Misinterpreted** (thought about “what ifs” and other extraneous matter NOT in the question).

3. **Missed** a “doctor” that changed the meaning that would have changed the answer chosen.

4. **Gave up** too quickly.

5. Is this a particular type of question that is historically more challenging (negatively phrased, case based, illustrated, math-related).

6. **Did not know** the information needed to problem-solve for the answer.