

# Orientation to the U.S.M.L.E.



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# Overview



- Introduction
- Timeline for the USMLE
- Application procedures
- USMLE steps
- Expenses
- Beyond the steps: What more is needed?
- Mistakes to avoid

# Introduction



- USMLE: United States Medical Licensing Examination
- It is a licensure (legal requirement)
- Scores are important as they are the only tool of uniform evaluation of candidates of varied backgrounds
- Administered by the FSMB Inc., NBME

# Examinations



- USMLE Step 1: MCQ based test similar to the First and Second profs.
- USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge: MCQ based test similar to the Third prof.
- USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills: Patient encounters similar to 'clinicals' in Medicine wards
- USMLE Step 3: Essentially, for residents/ H1 visa aspirants

# Timeline



USMLE Step 1



USMLE Step 2 CS & CK



(ECFMG certified)

USMLE Step 3



Apply for interviews (Sept. 1; ERAS)



Match (March)



Celebrations!

# Application procedure



- Get done with steps
- Search AAMC/ FRIEDA for programs offering residency
- Prepare list of preferred programs
- Apply for AAMC ID/ ERAS token
- Mail all documents to ERAS (along with payment!)
- ERAS 'sends' all documents to the selected programs
- Program selects candidates for interviews

# USMLE Step 1



- Subjects: Anatomy, Physiology, Biochemistry  
Pathology, Pharmacology, Microbiology & Immunology  
Behavioral science
- MCQ based theoretical exam
- Tested by Prometric Inc.
- Testing regions: USA, India
- Fee: \$740 + international surcharge \$140

# USMLE Step 1 (contd.)



- Important subjects: Pathology, Pharmacology
- Stress on clinically relevant topics
- Preparation: Kaplan<sup>®</sup> study notes
  - Goljan<sup>®</sup> notes
  - First Aid<sup>®</sup>
  - USMLE World<sup>®</sup> question bank



# USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge



- Subjects: Surgery (incl. orthopedics, Eye, ENT)  
Internal Medicine  
Obstetrics & Gynecology  
Pediatrics  
Behavioral science
- MCQ based theoretical exam
- Tested by Prometric Inc.
- Testing regions: USA, India
- Fee: \$740 + international surcharge \$140

# USMLE Step 2 CK (Contd.)



- Important subject: Internal Medicine
- Stress on clinically relevant topics
- Preparation: Kaplan<sup>®</sup> study notes
  - USMLE World<sup>®</sup> question bank
  - First Aid<sup>®</sup>
- Often, content from USMLE Step 1 can be tested

# USMLE Step 2 Clinical Skills



- Standardized patients used to test examinees for ability to:
  - Obtain history
  - Perform physical examination
  - Write patient notes
  - Communicate with patients
- Fee: \$ 1,295
- Preparation: First Aid<sup>®</sup> for Step 2 CS
- Site of testing: USA only (apply early)

# USMLE Step 3



- Subjects: Same as Step 2 CK
- 2 day exam with MCQs on day 1 and Clinical case simulations on day 2
- Not mandatory for residency
- Required in first year of residency or for H1 visa
- Testing region: USA only
- Fee: \$ 705
- Prefer to apply via Connecticut state as that has less stringent pre-conditions.

# Expenses (USD)



- USMLE Step 1: 740 + 140: 880
- USMLE Step 2 CK: 740 + 140: 880
- USMLE Step 2 CS: 1,295
- Travel / stay to USA (for CS): ~1,500
- AAMC applications to programs: ~ 3,000
- Travel and stay in USA: ~ 2,000
- \$10,000
- USMLE step 3 (excluding travel): 705
- Clerkship (excluding travel): ~1,500

# Beyond the steps: What more is needed?



- US Clinical experience: Clerkships  
Observerships  
Externships
- Research
- Volunteer work
- Letters of recommendation
- Personal statement

# US Clinical Experience



- Clerkship: Only during ‘final year’ of medical school
  - Done during internship
  - Hands-on work in wards/ consult service
  - Equivalent to a US medical school student
- Observership: Done at anytime during career
  - No hands-on work
  - Often done with ‘acquaintances’
  - Avoid private practitioners
- Refer to GMCCOSA website for tips

# Research



- Three types: Clinical research  
Translational research  
Basic research
- Advantages: Strengthens CV  
Provides money  
Foot-hold in a good program
- Disadvantages: Visa issues  
Significant investment of time (>1 year)  
Unfamiliarity with research procedures



# Volunteer work



- Weak area in the application of Foreign Medical graduates (FMG's)
- Suggestions: Associate yourself with self-help organizations
- Example: D.I.R. at Janta Colony
- Do not falsify claims
- No need of certifications to 'prove' your work
- Need not necessarily be in the field of medical sciences

# Letters of Recommendation



- Needed to certify the attributes of the applicant
- Should be concise, specific to candidate
- Do not get a 'generic' letter
- Person should have known the candidate for a reasonable period of time (>1 year)
- Stress on attributes like work ethic, hard-work, team-player ability, knowledge
- Must include one letter from 'home' medical school
- Preferably, get it waived

# Mistakes to Avoid



- Applying late for the match
- Incomplete documentation for ERAS
- Applying late for the USMLE Step 2 CS
- Incorrect credentials verification from GMCH
- Copying recommendation letters/ personal statements
- Spelling errors and false claims in CV/ LoR/ PS
- Applying for tourist visa after finishing MBBS
- Thinking that Program Directors in the USA are unaware about India's medical systems

# Help from GMCCOSA



- Guidance
- Place to stay
- Information about programs
- Help in research projects: guidance, statistics
- Practice interviews/ CS prep
  
- Generally can not get interview calls for you

# Popular Myths



- Medicine is the only residency that is given to FMG's
- Surgical specialties are never given to FMG's
- Step 2 CS should be taken in Philadelphia as it is FMG friendly
- Residency should never be done on a J1 visa
- An exceptional score guarantees a residency & a poor score makes it unattainable
- USMLE is 'easy'
- Life is 'easy' in the USA

# Visas



- H1 B visa: Considered the 'best' work visa  
Sponsored by the residency program  
Difficult to obtain  
No strings attached
- J1 visa: Work visa sponsored by the ECFMG  
Pre-condition of return to native country  
Easy to obtain (hard to get rid of!)
- B1/ B2 visa: Tourist visa for observership/ clerkship  
Better to get one while a student

# Helpful Links



- [www.ecfmg.org](http://www.ecfmg.org): Registration for FMG's  
: Applying for steps
- [www.usmle.org](http://www.usmle.org): Information about exams
- [www.prometric.com](http://www.prometric.com): Scheduling exams
  
- [www.usmletomd.com](http://www.usmletomd.com): Tips/ guidance
- [www.aamc.org](http://www.aamc.org): Information about medical colleges
  
- [www.gmccosa.org](http://www.gmccosa.org): Guidance/ queries/ comments

# Comments/ Questions



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GMCCOSA message board  
([www.gmccosa.org](http://www.gmccosa.org))