

TTUHSC SOM Expert Skills Program – Block 3 Step 1 Prep
Instructions and Information for Year 1 Students

Materials and Setting

1. A whiteboard will help facilitate discussion by allowing illustrations and/or concept maps.
 - Illustrating rationales during discussion develops a clarity that will become more structured in Year 2 when side-to-side maps are used to organize case questions.
 - Illustrations, even if only as a list, help to provide the experience that is consolidated by the brain into long term memory during sleep.
2. Print out enough templates from SuccessTypes website to record any case questions to be discussed.
3. Select enough questions to review in one hour.
 - Questions are located at an eRaider protected link.
 - Select questions from previous or current week.
 - Important! Most effective if group has had time to familiarize with concepts in questions, but *knowledge of the topic is not needed*.
 - Questions for Year 1 can be either case questions or ordinary topic questions. Avoid using any memorization only questions.
 - Emphasize ordinary questions over case questions at first.

Detailed Steps for Analysis of Ordinary Questions (nonUSMLE)

1. Session leader calls on first student to read the stem of the question.
 - Advice on procedure: goal is to frame the rest of your thinking; session leader keeps the session organized (note: be sure that one step is finished before the next one begins)
 - Advantages: develops habit of reading questions effectively
 - Potential problems: the side-to-side map template can't be used – discussion only; also, some stems will be too shallow – improvise!
2. Session leader calls on group members to identify relevant information for each answer that contributes to ruling it out.
 - Advice on procedure: try to relate rationale in terms of comparisons, cause-and-effect, or inclusion in a category (similar to a comparison).
 - Advantages: requirement to justify ruling out develops critical thinking skills; powerful long-term memory step
 - Potential problems: nothing like this early in curriculum; may need time to adjust to “ruling out thinking”
3. Relevance of rationales is frequently debated for clarity
 - Advice on procedure: Make sure logic is based on need to rule out and not just that it is relevant to the answer choice itself.
 - Advantages: Debates are important in developing your ability to defend your knowledge
 - Potential problems: This is business, not personal. It isn't about people believing you, it is about having a believable reason.
4. Session leader calls on group members to identify relevant information for the correct answer that contributes to accepting it.

- Advice on procedure: try to relate rationale in terms of comparisons, cause-and-effect, or inclusion in a category (similar to a comparison).
- Advantages: requirement to justify acceptance also develops critical thinking skills; powerful long-term memory step
- Potential problems: “it’s that way in the book” isn’t acceptable

Detailed Steps for Case Questions in Year 1

1. Session leader calls on first student to read the lead-in (the actual question at the end of the stem) and this is added to the concept map.
 - Advice on procedure: use the lead-in to frame the rest of your thinking; session leader keeps the session organized (note: be sure that one step is finished before the next one begins)
 - Advantages: develops ability to read questions effectively; identifies “fake” Step 1 questions that don’t require patient data in the stem to choose correct answer.
 - Potential problems: side-to-side map template can’t be used with fake Step 1 questions – can be useful review for block exams as described in section above; discussion only. Due to limited coverage of material needed for quality case questions, their use in year 1 will be limited.
2. Session leader calls on one or more students, as needed, to read from question and to propose patient data in stem to add to concept map.
 - Advice on procedure: better to propose a term and have it rejected – the discussion creates learning (many feedback comments on “I remembered the arguments best of all!”); start looking up terms that you don’t remember well.
 - Advantages: develops ability to read questions effectively; identifies areas that can be singled out post-session
 - Potential problems: impatience, at first; waiting for someone else to start looking up trigger words; delay in proposing a rationale for map
3. Session leader adds relevant information to concept map by calling on additional students; other significant information is added to patient data
 - Advice on procedure: extra information is used to discuss significance of patient data; this is routine during clerkship rounds
 - Ask for important details concerning any of the data to be added, e.g. what type of drug? Has decreased cardiac output? Etc.)
 - Ask about what other kinds of lead-ins might be used with the stem. Not recorded on board, but can be noted on individual sheets. New lead-ins would require a new set of answer choices. Develops ability to anticipate during study of course material.
 - Advantages: extra information can come from other courses, current or prior; increases integrative knowledge and long term memory through association
 - Potential problems: uncertainty about being correct
4. Session leader fills in answer choice information in concept map template
 - Advice on procedure: limited space in map requires paraphrasing (this is OK); identify correct answer ahead of time.
 - Advantages: fill-in time allows for mental focus on overall question.
 - Potential problems: impatience, at first

5. Session leader calls on group members to identify relevant information for each answer that contributes to ruling it out.
 - Advice on procedure: most difficult step; try to relate rationale for inclusion to patient data from question stem
 - Advantages: requirement to justify inclusion develops critical thinking skills; powerful long-term memory step
 - Potential problems: nothing like this in curriculum; may need time to adjust to “ruling out thinking”
6. Relevance is frequently debated for clarity
 - Advice on procedure: Make sure inclusion is based on need to rule out and not just that it is relevant to the answer choice itself.
 - Advantages: Debates are important in developing your ability to defend your knowledge
 - Potential problems: This is business, not personal. It isn’t about people believing you, rather it is about having a reason.
7. Group proposes pathophysiology crosslinks between answer choices and patient data in question.
 - Advice on procedure: this is the fun part; based on prior discussion draw connections from all answer choices to the patient data. Don’t forget to classify question – need to access later during Step 1 review.
 - Advantages: More connections from correct answer illustrate integrative thinking required; occasional connections from wrong answers illustrate conditional probability.
 - Potential problems: problems at this step have not been observed.

Tips and Other Helpful Information (Useful for peer tutors/mentors)

- This will not feel natural for some at first, but this improves after a few sessions. It is still working even while you are adapting.
 - The MS1 experience is a lower intensity (time spent and question complexity); goal is mainly proficiency in the method (also better exam prep) by beginning of year 2.
 - The MS2 experience is higher intensity including year 1 topic integration to refresh relevant high yield topics.
- Emphasis is not on what you *remember* but on hearing your *thinking* along with the others.
 - What you remember will improve as a “carry-over” effect.
 - If you are uncertain, just let others speak; you will eventually feel comfortable.
- After you are comfortable with the process, it doesn’t need to be followed rigidly step-by-step.
- The ambiance should be “on the edge of chaos.”
 - Too much chaos – disorder; nothing gets done.
 - Too much order – stilted; lecture boredom returns.
 - Edge of chaos – self organization; disorder in conversation leads to organization through consensus.
- Create an image of yourself in a rotation group. Each question is a patient. Same ethics and responsibilities but without being “pimped.”
- Not everybody needs to talk, but everybody needs to think.
- Competition is good when it leads to a rationale that everyone understands.

- You will remember arguments, what you say, what others say, your mistakes, things you couldn't recall, or in other words, pretty much everything.
- This can't be comprehensive, it just has to make sense for what is covered in the time available.
 - Involves deep analysis; deep analysis contributes to long-term memory.
- Anything obvious from year 1 should be emphasized with a side-note, even if it doesn't go in the map.
 - Some students elect to review some topics post-session.
- When reaching group consensus, one person speaks at a time; be polite (this rule contributed by Class of 2004).
 - Side conversations are a normal part of the process.
 - Periods of deliberation and reading alternate with reaching consensus.
 - Each group will develop its own sense of order.

Please contact Dr. Pelley any time there is a question or problem – or an interesting observation.

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