



## DARTMOUTH MEDICAL SCHOOL

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To: All DMS Faculty and administrators

From: David Nierenberg, MD

Subject: Performance of DMS students on USMLE Step II CK (clinical knowledge) during AY 05-06 (class of 56 seniors graduating June '06)

I just received the final report from the NBME indicating how our recently graduated seniors did on USMLE Step II, which they took July '05 through June '06. As you know, it is a DMS requirement to take this exam prior to graduation, but it is not required to pass it. Starting this year, we require all seniors to take this exam prior to December, so they will have their passing scores in their hands by Match Day in March; or, in the event they should fail, so they will have time to study and attempt it a second time.

The exam includes material covered (with about equal emphasis) during Year 2 (mostly SBM systems-based courses) and Years 3/4 of the curriculum (clerkships, subinternships, electives, coursework, etc.). Most students take the exam during the fall of their fourth years.

Overall, this year the news is very positive. While the national mean score for all seniors has been slowly rising up to 221 points this year, our mean score of 229 this year is the highest it has ever been since I began tracking these scores in 1993. Our mean score of 229 is 8 points above the national mean, also tied for the highest difference from the national mean score. More very good news is that in the broad areas of Medicine and Surgery, our scores this year (in SD above the national mean) are the highest they have been since the "new format" scoring was introduced in 2002. Finally, our pass rate this year was 55 of 56 seniors on their first attempt (98.2%), up from 91.7% last year, and compared to a national pass rate this year of 94.3%.

We believe that last year's (AY 04-05) pass rate of only 91.7% was an anomaly, with five seniors out of 60 failing the exam. Since then,

Dr. Shirley and I have found that the performance of our juniors on their NBME shelf exams during their clerkships (Medicine, Psychiatry, and Ob-Gyn) is a very good predictor of their performance during their senior year on USMLE Step II CK. We have encouraged all seniors to spend a bit more time preparing for this exam, and are beginning to work with the seniors who struggled the most on their Year 3 exams to spend some extra time reviewing for this USMLE exam.

The NBME also provides us with more detailed mean scores for our DMS students versus the national reference group (all graduating seniors who took the exam). They organize these reports in three areas, with our mean score expressed as standard deviations above or below the national mean score. I've looked at how DMS has done in each area over the past five years, since the new format exam and report was begun, and to "smooth out" small year-to-year variation. Here are the three areas, from highest to lowest, with those areas where we are probably statistically significantly above the national mean in bold font:

Five-year average score by traditional core clinical discipline, highest to lowest:

<b>Psychiatry</b>	<b>0.27 SD above the national mean</b>
<b>Ob-Gyn</b>	<b>0.26 SD</b>
<b>Medicine</b>	<b>0.24 SD</b>
<b>Surgery</b>	<b>0.21 SD</b>
Peds	0.06 SD

Five-year average score by organ system, roughly (but not exactly) as broken down by SBM, from highest to lowest:

<b>Musculoskeletal/skin/CT</b>	<b>0.37 SD above the national mean</b>
<b>Gyn disorders</b>	<b>0.30 SD</b>
<b>Respiratory disorders</b>	<b>0.29 SD</b>
<b>Mental disorders</b>	<b>0.23 SD</b>
<b>Cardiovascular disorders</b>	<b>0.19 SD</b>
<b>Renal/urinary and male reprod</b>	<b>0.18 SD</b>
<b>Disorders of pregn/childbirth</b>	<b>0.18 SD</b>
Endo/metabolic disorders	0.14 SD
Hematologic disorders	0.09 SD
Immunologic disorders	0.06 SD
Nutrition and GI disorders	0.03 SD
Neuro/special senses disorder	0.02 SD

Five-year average score by broad subject category, from highest to lowest:

<b>Normal growth and development</b>	
<b>Principles of care</b>	<b>0.50 SD above the national mean</b>

<b>Prev med/health maintenance</b>	<b>0.29 SD</b>
<b>Principles of management</b>	<b>0.28 SD</b>
Mechanisms of disease	0.13 SD
Diagnosis	0.12 SD

Overall, this is excellent news. In **every** area, DMS seniors scored higher than the national reference group of seniors, and in many areas our scores improved compared to past year. I thank each of you as DMS faculty members and administrators for helping our students enter this difficult exam with excellent preparation.

*PS. In the fall of 2004, for the first time seniors across the country needed to take the new USMLE Step II CS (Clinical Skills) exam, which is basically a full day of 12 OSCE stations. At DMS, we require all students to take this exam, and I recommend that they do so prior to December. We have a very strong OSCE program in Years 1, 2, and 3 that is required for all of our students. In the period June 2004 through June 2005, the DMS pass rate was 98.6% (72/73 students), and nationally the pass rate for seniors from US and Canadian schools was 96.4% (15,260/15,838). For the Class of 2006, our pass rate was once again very high, about 98.1%. In both years, our seniors who failed on their first attempt were successful on their second attempt.*