

Academic Support Network
Student Suggestion Sheet
Internal Medicine

Overview: Internal Medicine is the longest and most extensive clerkship of the third year. It is the cornerstone of all the medical professionals and while its scope is broad, understanding the basic concepts is essential to being a talented physician in any field. The key to mastering these skills is through understanding how systems work and interact with each other. It is very easy to get bogged down in the details as there are many to choose from but having a concrete basis of the rationale behind the exams and findings will serve you considerably greater than any amount of rote memorization.

Basically, the best way to learn this material is through involvement in patient care as much as possible. This helps your performance in two ways. It emphasizes your clinical skills by showing interest while allowing for more productive feedback from residents and attendings (if you actually do something, right or wrong, they can either validate your thinking or redirect you to more appropriate approaches to the task at hand). It is also a wonderful way of remembering certain major concepts or disease processes as you will undoubtedly remember a detail if it is associated with a person you saw so learn from your patients as much as you can. **Keep in mind that 2/3 of your grade is based on your clinical performance versus a mere 1/3 for the shelf.** **Focusing your studying merely to do well on the shelf exam will do little to impress your clinical evaluators who expect you to know about the diseases seen in your patients.** **Moral of the story—learn from your patients as much as possible as it is a win-win situation for everyone involved.** There is more than enough time at the end of the clerkship to review those common topics that you might not have come across during your 12 weeks in medicine.

Books: Choosing the appropriate books to read and review from is very helpful as internal medicine can be overwhelming. Avoid the “classic” medicine texts like Harrison’s and Cecil’s for every day reading as they contain way more than you need to know at this point. However, these are excellent books to read on a specific topic when caring for a patient. They can be accessed through the UIC Hospital website at MD Consult or through the UIC library website using your UIC login (see ASN website for details). Some examples of student friendly books include:

- 1) Pocket Medicine: The Massachusetts General Hospital Handbook of Internal Medicine- This is an awesome pocket reference for internal medicine topics. Most interns also carry this book. It has references for the New England Journal of Medicine and other high profile journals, so you can look up key articles related to your patients. Excellent summaries of most common diseases
- 2) Ferri: Practical Guide to the Care of the Medical Patient- This is a wonderful pocket-sized book that you can look up everything from what the abnormal lab value could be associated with to procedures to major disease process and how to handle them. This book is excellent for on-the-ward learning as well as a great review for the week prior to the shelf exam.
- 3) First Aid for Medicine is an excellent resource if you prefer an outline format. Also, it contains most of the key material if you have a difficult time focusing your studying.
- 4) Current Medical Diagnosis & Treatment – Available on-line off the UIC library website so no need to purchase a copy of your own. You will never get through it during the clerkship (so don’t even bother) but it is fabulous for looking up problems your patients might present with or have as a part of their medical history. It’s extremely easy to read and covers everything from clinical pearls to treatment and management. This book is

great for those presentations which you are occasionally asked to put together at the last minute.

- 5) NMS Medicine- This book is a long read, but can be finished during the rotation. It covers most of the important concepts and has review questions after each chapter.
- 6) Dubin's- If you have difficulty with EKG's this is the classic book to help explain things. Pretty basic stuff in very easy, student friendly format. This book is a great start but what you really need to do is sit down with every EKG you come across and go through all the steps to interpret it. (These are outlines in First aid for the medicine clerkship if you need an easy reference). If you don't see it on the EKG, don't be afraid to ask someone. Understanding how these are read are pretty vital to the clerkship (and being an on-call doctor!) and you will only get better by repetition so keep at it and ask for help.
- 7) MKSAP 2 for students- This is a question book published by the American Board of Internal Medicine; the same people who produce the board exam in internal medicine. Students have found this to be a fairly challenging book as it contains basically the "easy questions" for third year medicine residents; so don't be intimidated. The best part of this book is that cases are very much true to what you will find in medicine (and the medicine shelf exam) and the explanations of the answers are very helpful in the learning process. It also includes a CD ROM with the same questions in a computer-based format.
- 8) Pretest for Medicine and for Clinical Diagnosis are good question books for shelf preparation. You can review them again for your Family Medicine exam if you take notes while doing the questions.

Clinical Tips:

- Be organized: Create a sheet for each patient you are following. On one side it should contain basic info such as room number, MR number, weight, allergies. It should also have a running problem list, in-patient medications, and imaging or procedural results for this hospitalization. This should be updated throughout their stay with dates for each addition/change. The other side should have a daily list of vitals, labs, and things to do for the patient each day after rounds (make a check list of items discussed on each patient during rounds). (see the scut sheet on the ASN website)
- Be punctual. Internists like anyone else value their time; so be professional.
- Be inquisitive. Ask questions whenever possible regarding patient care. You will quickly learn which questions are appropriate for residents (how to manage fluids, how to interpret basic labs/images) and which are most for attendings (specific to the specialty/sub-specialty).
- Be a team player. Offer information to the discussion whenever possible. The New England Journal of Medicine and Annals of Internal Medicine (both are online through the library) are great places to look up articles for discussion.

Exam Pointers:

The information on the exam is very extensive (more so than could possibly be listed on this sheet) and preparation throughout the course is the key to being successful. With that in mind, listed below are some basic topics/information that you should have mastered for the exam.

- Diabetes – definitions, clinical presentations of hypo- and hyper glycemia, treatment options and when to apply them, side effects of treatments (oral pills, Dawn phenomenon), complications of disease (peripheral and autonomic neuropathy, nephropathy, retinal changes).
- CAD – risk factors, preventative medications, clinical presentation of acute infarction and its treatment, definition of angina, use of different cardiac testing procedures,

- HTN – definition, medications (how they work, when to use them is different patients, contraindications, side effects)
- Acid-Base – be able to recognize acidosis/alkalosis and whether it's primary cause is respiratory versus metabolic derangements.
- Preventative medicine – ages at which to screen for certain cancers, who should receive adult vaccinations
- COPD – association with smoking, definition of chronic bronchitis, treatment for exacerbations
- Asthma – classification and treatment

We hope that this sheet helps direct your studying. As stated above, this sheet does not list everything you need to know and it is highly recommended that you follow up with your student advisor and your clerkship director for more specific advice regarding your situation and how you should approach the remaining exams.

Good luck!