

Add your Patient

As you know Multiple Choice Questions are the format for most medical school examinations. The questions, as you may have noticed go something like this:

A patient comes in presenting something, they get examined, get some tests done, the results of the tests show something and then they are treated by a drug of some sort – right? This is because this is how it works in the “real world” – the world outside of medical school, in case you forgot there is one.

Patients do not go into their doctor saying “Doctor, I have cancer as evidenced by my WBC count. Usually they come in saying something like: “I have this sore that just doesn’t seem to heal – can you tell me why that would be?” In turn, you will likely ask some questions, examine the patient, note other signs or symptoms, request some blood tests (which ones? and the results will show (what?) indicative of cancer. Then you will review options and make recommendations.

It is up to you to put together what you have learned and apply it as a way of demonstrating your ability to apply the basic knowledge information to real life situations. Using a hypothetical patient is a good way to do this, so why not start right now to study the way you will be tested?

Study with application in mind:

- a. How/what will a patient present with if they had X
- b. What physical exam/diagnostic results would I expect to find if a patient had X
- c. What is/are the possible treatments or next clinical step for a patient with X

An effective way to test your own understanding of material, and to improve your recall, is to **Add Your Patient**.

If you put all of this information together, you now have a patient. Indeed, you have just created a vignette in NBME style that could be used as an exam question.

Of course it takes time to do this with all material, but you can utilize it for certain topics and if you don’t wish to develop a question, you can simply walk through the active learning process of filling out the various questions which will elevate your understanding of the topic.

Worksheet – Add your Patient

- 1. How will a patient with disease X present? What will the patient herself complain about?
To make it more real you may wish to actually give the patient a name (this may help you to remember the concepts during testing).*
- 2. Is age/sex/race etc important to disease X? What is the significance?*
- 3. Is a particular lifestyle/environment a risk factor for disease X?*
- 4. How common is this disease?*
- 5. What significant findings will appear in the patient's history?*
- 6. What significant findings will appear on physical exam?*
- 7. What tests would you order?*
- 8. What might be the underlying agent/cause of the disease X?*
- 9. What is the prognosis of disease X?*
- 10. What are the treatments (drug, surgery, lifestyle change, etc)?*
- 11. What key point from the lecture is illustrated by disease X? What does it exemplify?*

Templates (plug in your information from your scenario)

A (*patient description*) has a (*type of injury and location*). Which of the following structures is most likely to be affected?

A (*patient description*) has (*history findings*) and is taking (*medications*). Which of the following medications is the most likely cause of his (*one history, PE or lab finding*)?

A (*patient description*) has (*abnormal findings*). Which [additional] finding would suggest/suggests a diagnosis of (*disease 1*) rather than (*disease 2*)?

A (*patient description*) has (*symptoms and signs*). These observations suggest that the disease is a result of the (*absence or presence*) of which of the following (*enzymes, mechanisms*)?

A (*patient description*) follows a (*specific dietary regime*). Which of the following conditions is most likely to occur?

A (*patient description*) has (*symptoms, signs, or specific disease*) and is being treated with (*drug or drug class*). The drug acts by inhibiting which of the following (*functions, processes*)?

A (*patient description*) has (*abnormal findings*). Which of the following (*positive laboratory results*) would be expected?

(*time period*) after a (*event such as trip or meal with certain foods*), a (*patient or group description*) became ill with (*symptoms and signs*). Which of the following (*organisms, agents*) is most likely to be found on analysis of (*food*)?

Following (*procedure*), a (*patient description*) develops (*symptoms and signs*). Laboratory findings show (*findings*). Which of the following is the most likely cause?

A (*patient description*) dies of (*disease*). Which of the following is the most likely finding on autopsy?

A patient has (*symptoms and signs*). Which of the following is the most likely explanation for the (*findings*)?

A (*patient description*) has (*symptoms and signs*). Exposure to which of the (*toxic agents*) is the most likely cause?

Which of the following is the most likely mechanism of the therapeutic effect of this (*drug class*) in patients with (*disease*)?

A patient has (*abnormal findings*), but (*normal findings*). Which of the following is the most likely diagnosis?