Looking ahead to the MCAT 2015

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) will roll out a new version of the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) in the beginning of 2015. The MCAT is substantially revised roughly every twenty years, and this will be the fifth such revision in the test’s history. The new MCAT was developed to reflect the increasing importance in medicine of interdisciplinary thinking, scientific reasoning, and the psychosocial contexts of health.

Like prior versions of the MCAT, the new exam tests knowledge of the basic scientific disciplines—biology, general and organic chemistry, and physics—necessary for advanced study in medicine. The new MCAT will also include material from psychology and sociology, with particular emphasis on the ways in which psychological and sociological determinants can affect health at both the individual and population levels. The new MCAT will also include an interdisciplinary section, testing critical thinking ability across a range of social sciences and humanities disciplines.

The test will comprise four sections, each 90 to 95 minutes in length:

- **Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems** covers the processes unique to living systems, such as growing and reproducing, homeostasis, metabolism, responding to environmental changes, and adaptation. This section also covers how cells and organ systems act independently and together to accomplish these processes.

- **Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems** tests your knowledge of the basic chemical and physical principles underlying the mechanisms at work in the human body.

- **Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior** covers material related to the psychological and socio-cultural determinants of health. This section will test knowledge of perception, behavior and behavior change, cultural differences that influence well-being, and the relationships among social stratification, healthcare access, and well-being.

- **Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills** requires examinees to critically analyze, evaluate, and apply information from a range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. This section does not require prior knowledge of any particular discipline; all necessary information appears in provided passages.

Questions on the 2015 MCAT are written to test both content knowledge and particular skills in scientific inquiry and reasoning. Within the natural, social, and behavioral sections of the MCAT, all questions test one of the following four skills:

- Knowledge of scientific concepts and principles
- Scientific reasoning and evidence-based problem solving
- Reasoning about the design and execution of research
- Data-based and statistical reasoning

The AAMC recommends that students complete introductory coursework in psychology and sociology to prepare for this course. For those who major in the social sciences and/or have elective space in their curriculum, the Core sociology sequence followed by 2-3 additional courses within the social sciences should prepare you well for this section. For those majoring outside of the social sciences and/or who have a tight curricular path, the Core sociology sequence plus SOSC 18100: Topics in Behavioral and Social Sciences Relevant to Medicine (offered in Autumn and Winter) should provide solid preparation.
To prepare for the Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills, we recommend that students read material from a range of sources, from periodicals to academic journals, in a variety of fields.

For detailed information about the 2015 MCAT, please see the AAMC’s website: https://www.aamc.org/students/applying/mcat/

2013 and 2014 Sittings of the MCAT

Before 2015, the MCAT will continue to comprise three sections—Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Verbal Reasoning. The Writing Sample has been removed from the test. In its place, an optional trial section has been added. Examinees may opt to take or not to take this section, which includes trial questions from the 2015 MCAT. Results from the trial section are not reported to medical schools.