

alphabet soup

To remember what happens in the first year of medical school, here is a simple mnemonic:

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ,

Also better known as the alphabet.

A is for acceptance, or AHHH, THE LETTER IS HERE!!

In which the brown package arrives in the mail. The "AHHH" in this case is to most the shriek of excitement and elation as you happily rip open the envelope, eager to see the fruition of many years of dreaming and hard work. To others, the "AHHH" is a scream of despair, as in "AHHH-now-my-parents-won't-pay-to-send-me-to-London" or "AHHH-now-I-have-no-choice-but-to-follow-my-parents'-wishes-and-study-medicine".

B is for barrage of worries

As the initial phase of happiness/excitement/shock/consternation wears off, the reality of what has happened slowly seeps in. Typical pre-school (as in before school, not the place you attend before primary school) anxieties drift into your brain – Will I have friends there? Will my classmates be scary? Will I fail? Etc, etc.

C is for camp

Where you meet your orientation group (OG) mates and play lots of games that somehow or another always involve mud and water. And you getting covered with them. It is also where seniors make ominous remarks about how this is the best part of the year. And later on, when you're wading through all your notes and diagrams about the cardiovascular system, you think back and agree wholeheartedly.

D is for dance

Which you first encounter during Medcamp; and then soon after, Rag; and later on, Playhouse; and then, during the Med-Law games; and in more recent years, Operation Theatre. While this activity is incongruous to the supposed "boring mugger with two left feet" image that stereotypical medical students have, many nevertheless do partake in it as a way to relieve stress and an attempt to burn off the fats that have built up after all those long sedentary sessions in the library.

E is for egg cartons

Which you had to paint for rag, and while dull-sounding, was actually the best job available because the other jobs involved things like sticking your hands into vile-smelling starch and inhaling toxic fumes from the potent glue.

F is for first day of school, or FREAKING HELL, MY CLASSMATES CAME AT 6 A.M. TO CHOPE GOOD SEATS IN THE LECTURE THEATRE WHEN CLASSES START AT 8:30.

This is self-explanatory.

G is for gross anatomy

Which makes you wish that life was less complex. Literally. Who needs so many muscles, nerves and blood vessels anyway?!

H is for histology, or Huh? Bifurcated mitochondria?

I is for imagination, and also for improvisation

Both are needed in great amounts during histology.

J is for jaw-dropping

Which is only way to describe the impressive and painfully detailed memories of some of your classmates as they answer questions during tutorial, reciting paragraphs from Snell as though they were Shakespearean sonnets.

K is for kill

Which is something you feel like doing to your textbooks sometimes. Especially after five hours of plowing through the cardiovascular chapters in Guyton and Hall and realizing that you're nowhere near halfway done, and that you've already forgotten what you've read at the start.

L is for lectures

The experience of which is analogous to treading water in the Arctic Ocean – you try to keep afloat, and struggle to not give in to fatigue.

M is for muggertoad

Which is what most of us invariably become, or already are, whether we like to admit it or not.

medical students' mailbox

N is for nonsense

Which medical students churn out great quantities of, as can be seen by all the jokes that start floating around after exceptionally long histology sessions, or prolonged periods of mugging, i.e.,

Q: What did the joker say to the parotid gland?

A: Why so serous?

Har, har, har.

O is for OMMMMM

The sound of you meditating and trying not to strangle your genius, slightly insensitive but otherwise well-meaning classmate, who is well on his way on getting onto the Dean's list, and is infinitely more prepared than you are for the upcoming CA, but still won't shut up about how he thinks he's going to fail

P is for Playhouse

An event where a bunch of people get to do all sorts of weird things and have fun not studying under the guise of team-building and bringing glory to the batch. It is also a time of epic sets and props, and medical students find out how versatile cardboard actually is.

P is also for Physiology, which makes you wonder why you ever complained about Anatomy.

Q is for QukkrrrkzzzdfshfoasaskjnoSPLAT

Which is the sound of your head hitting the table as you finish your rant on how difficult everything is, while you're desperately wondering if you will ever manage to do this right and become a good doctor.

R is for retarded

Which is how you feel after you attempt to figure out how the loop of Henle works, before finding out that your original idea was right and you've just been going around in circles.

S is for sleep

Which becomes something of a luxury as you progress into the year.

T is for tests

Which initially give you plenty of sleepless nights and panic attacks. However, as the year progresses on, you realize that it is quite silly to be afraid of a stack of papers, and you start treating them with wary apprehension instead. This may also be because after the first few tests, you realize that there is no point in getting worked up for not topping the level like you used to in JC, and that you should just enjoy the ride instead of getting down on all fours and bleeding your knees out just to try to get to the top.

U is for unprepared

Which for some reason always seems to be your default mental state, because no matter how hard you try, you just can't remember everything in the textbook.

V is for vexed

Which is how you initially feel when you first open the textbook and are met with mountains of words you have never encountered in your life, and phrasings that are more complex than the convoluted tubule (har har har).

W is for wonder

Which you start to feel once you finally start understanding what's been going on, because as all the systems start falling into place, you start marveling at the miracle that is the human body, and you start remembering why you're here. And suddenly, everything looks great. That is, until-

W is also for worry as the assessment approaches and you are nowhere near done with even looking through your notes, and you start doubting whether you can really make it past this year, much less become a doctor.

X is for X_X

Which sums up how you are at 3 a.m. the day of the paper, when you finally acknowledge that there is just no way to finish studying.

Y is for YAY! THE TEST IS OVER!

Or more often than not, YARGHHH, I STAYED UP TILL 5 TO STUDY RENAL AND BLOOD CAME OUT FOR ESSAY INSTEAD!!

Which brings us to...

Z is for Zzz...



Medicamp X, the Medical Faculty's freshman orientation camp, will be held in June 2010. If you would like to make any contributions, please contact us at medicamp.marketing@gmail.com. Thank you!