

## MCAT 2015: A New Revolution by Kris Slawinski, U of Chicago

After the Flexner Report revolutionized medical education in the nineteen-teens, the attrition rate in medical schools skyrocketed in the early 1920s, precipitating the need for a screening test for medical school candidates. Thus was born the Medical College Admission Test, or MCAT, which has gone through four iterations over the past 90 years. The current MCAT, at 24 years old, is being phased out this year for a new format which will screen for thinking on a higher level.

The previous iteration of the MCAT included three sections: Physical Sciences, Verbal Reasoning, and Biological Sciences. The 2015 version will feature new sections, titled “Biological and Biochemical Foundations of Living Systems,” “Chemical and Physical Foundations of Biological Systems,” “Psychological, Social and Biological Foundations of Behavior,” and “Critical Analysis and Reasoning Skills.”

The new Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior section will require some background in sociology, ethics, and philosophy, and is causing concern for students and advisors on campuses nationwide, due to the additional content which could add even more required courses to already-heavy premedical student course loads. However, students may also rely on outside resources, such as the non-profit educational organization Khan Academy, which will offer free online resources to prepare students for this new test, including practice modules. It should be noted that all test questions for all sections of the 2015 MCAT will be new.

The new, expanded MCAT will take 7 hours 30 minutes of seat time, for a total test time of 6 hours 15 minutes. Due to the increased length of the exam, students requiring accommodations for extra testing time may take the test over two days.

The AAMC will hold first year MCAT2015 scores until July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, in order to have a large enough database to determine correct percentiles. Many medical schools will be accepting MCAT scores from the previous 45-point scale exam along with new MCAT2015 scores for several years, though these MCAT requirements vary by institution. Schools will be feeling their way for a while and comparing scores of the old MCATs to the new, until it becomes clear what score range indicates the best candidate for their institution.

While this change may not have a direct impact on us as SP educators, it is hoped that the new exam will increase the quality of admissions candidates by focusing on skills not previously assessed, as the MCAT2015 requires broader knowledge and tests more reasoning skills, and also includes a larger focus on health disparities and populations health. Better students will require more complex challenges for their skill set, and

greater creativity on our part. SP educators can only look forward to increasing engagement on a higher level in the years to come!