INTRODUCTION

The United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 2 allows you to pull together your clinical experience on the wards with the numerous “factoids” and classical disease presentations that you have memorized over the years. Whereas Step 1 stresses basic disease mechanisms and principles, Step 2 places more emphasis on clinical diagnosis and management, disease pathogenesis, and preventive medicine.

The Step 2 exam is now composed of two parts:

- The Step 2 Clinical Knowledge examination (Step 2 CK)
- The Step 2 Clinical Skills examination (Step 2 CS)

The USMLE Step 2 CK is the second of three examinations that you must pass in order to become a licensed physician in the United States. The computerized Step 2 CK is a one-day (nine-hour) multiple-choice exam.

Students are also required to take the Step 2 CS, which is a one-day live exam in which students examine 12 standardized patients. The goal of the Step 2 CS is to ensure that students from more than 1600 medical schools worldwide, with varying curricula and educational standards, can collect and interpret a history, perform a physical exam, and communicate with patients at a comparable level. For more information on this examination, please refer to First Aid for the USMLE Step 2 CS. Information about the Step 2 CS format and about eligibility, registration, and scoring can be found at www.nbme.org.

The information found in this section as well as in the remainder of the book will address only the Step 2 CK.

USMLE STEP 2 CK—COMPUTER-BASED TESTING BASICS

How Will the CBT Be Structured?

The Step 2 CK is a computer-based test (CBT) administered by Prometric, Inc. It is a one-day exam with 368 questions divided into eight 60-minute blocks of 46 questions each. A new form of testing software called FRED is now being used by the USMLE. FRED is different from the Step 1 exam you took in that you can now highlight and strike out test choices as well as make brief notes to yourself. During the time allotted for each block, the examinee can answer test questions in any order as well as review responses and change answers just as in the Step 1 exam—but examinees cannot go back and change answers from previous blocks. Once an examinee finishes a block, he or she must click on a screen icon to continue to the next block. Time not used during a testing block will be added to your overall break time, but it cannot be used to complete other testing blocks. Expect to spend up to nine hours at the test center.

Testing Conditions: What Will the CBT Be Like?

Even if you’re familiar with CBT and the Prometric test centers, FRED is a new testing format that you should access from the USMLE CD-ROM or Web site (www.usmle.org) and try out prior to the exam.

If you familiarize yourself with the FRED testing interface ahead of time, you can skip the 15-minute tutorial offered on exam day and add those minutes to your allotted break time of 45 minutes.