

# The use of third-party resources for USMLE Step 1 exam advice

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## INTRODUCTION

- Most literature surrounding United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step 1 focuses on the efficacy of content resources
- As third-party vendors permeate the market, the validity of the information students trust arises
- Use of online anonymous platforms like Reddit and Student Doctor Network (SDN) is increasingly common, leading to an unregulated flow of information outside of formal education
- The study at hand examines students' information-seeking behaviors surrounding USMLE Step 1 and aims to identify the qualities students look for when seeking study advice
- Of particular interest was analyzing students' attitudes towards anonymous online forums
- Secondary endpoint was to evaluate possible associations between information entrusted and student performance on the USMLE Step 1 exam

## METHODS

- An online survey was designed and distributed by email to the students at a large public medical school. The survey was sent three months after students sat for USMLE Step 1 (below)
- The survey was completely anonymous and included questions about the following topics:
  - Resources students utilized for studying
  - Appealing qualities about each resource along with their perceived accuracy and helpfulness
- Appeal of online platforms (Reddit/SDN) and university-provided information
- Descriptive statistics were compiled from student responses

Survey piloted on Class of 2021 (51 responses)

Survey edited to cater more towards what aspects students valued in resources used

Survey distributed to Class of 2022 three months after sitting for USMLE Step 1

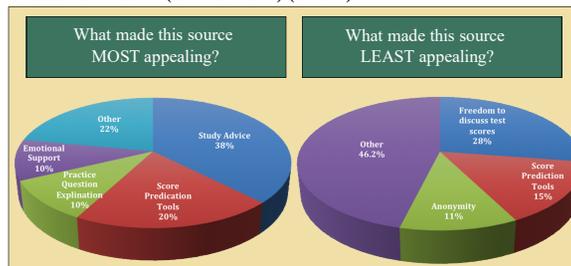
## RESULTS

- 158 Responses, 154 completed all questions (~50%) in the Class of 2022

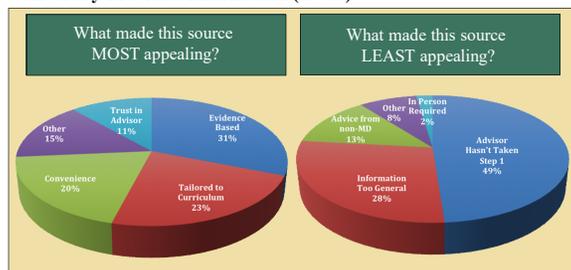
### What resources used and why?

What resource was the MOST helpful for Step 1 information?	34.5%: Older Peers 31.8%: Reddit/ SDN 14.9%: M2 Students
What is MOST important in terms of Step 1 information?	30.92%: personalized advice 23.03%: evidence-based advice 15.13%: from someone you trust

### Online Resources (Reddit/ SDN) (n=109)

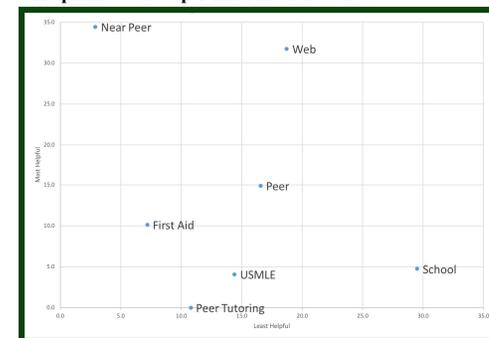


### University Provided Information (n= 87)



## Figures

Figure 1: Helpfulness of Step 1 Information Sources



## CONCLUSIONS

- Students turn to their peers most often, followed by online sources including Reddit/SDN
- Reddit/SDN offer advice, score prediction tools, and practice exam explanations
- University-based curriculum is tailored to the curriculum, evidence-based, and convenient
- As medical education climate changes, formal evidence-based strategies can adapt to regulate information sources
  - Continue utilizing personalized evidence-based information but integrate valued features of Reddit/SDN to cater to students' needs

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Burk-Rafel, J., Santen, S.A., & Purkiss, J.A. (2017). Study Behaviors and USMLE Step 1 Performance: Implications of a Student Self-Directed Parallel Curriculum. *Academic Medicine*, 92, S67-S74.
- <sup>2</sup>Judd, Terry, Elliott, Kristine. "Selection and Use of Online Learning Resources by First-Year Medical Students: Cross-Sectional Study." *JMIR medical education*. Vol 3, e 17. 2 Oct 2017. doi:10.2196/mededu.7382
- <sup>3</sup>Ajayi N. Library use and information-seeking behavior of medical students. *Anthropologist*. 2004;6(3):209-213.