

Osteopathic faculty write text to help standardized test takers

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Three years ago, Donald Sefcik, senior associate dean of Michigan State University's College of Osteopathic Medicine, set out to write a guide to help medical and physician assistant students study for standardized tests.

One of his editor's first suggestions was to expand the audience to students of all health professions; a second editor enlarged the target further to include anyone involved with standardized testing - high school, college and professional students and the people who advise them.

The result is a new text of more than 200 pages called *How to Study for Standardized Tests*, published by Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Working with co-authors Gillian Bice, director of academic and professional development at MSU's College of Osteopathic Medicine, and Frank Prerost, professor of family medicine at the Midwestern University College of Osteopathic Medicine, Sefcik took the approach of writing about the process of preparation, independent of content.

The result is a handbook that is nearly universally applicable, whether a student is preparing for the ACT, SAT, GRE, MCAT, LSAT or professional board exams.

The team based the book on a game/sports analogy of performance enhancement and the firm belief that few students are inherently poor at

such testing but need to be trained in the skills to succeed.

Major themes in the book include:

- Performance is related to behavior, the movement from goals to plans to action.
- Self-regulation - monitoring and making adjustments - is vital to achievement.
- An attitude of self-effectiveness is powerful. Those who view [standardized tests](#) as a challenge to conquer do better than those who view them as something that's an external mandate.
- Pacing is important during timed tests, and that requires specific practice in making on-the-fly decisions about how long to spend on the tough questions.

"We advise our readers that when they are taking course exams, those tests are like leaping little hurdles, but a standardized test is more like a pole vault," Sefcik said. "Both require discipline and training, but the training is different for each."

Provided by Michigan State University

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