

The “10 Most Wanted” Test Cheaters in Medical Education

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Cheating in Medical Education

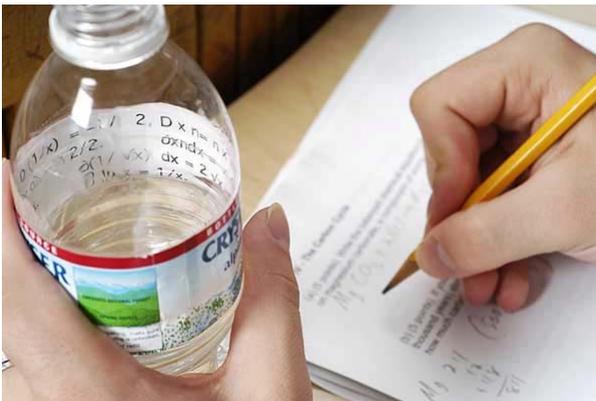
- Research estimates between 0-58% of students have cheated during medical school
- Any estimate of cheating is likely underestimated
- Research from graduate medical education suggests the use of “exam recalls” (access to previous exam items and answers) has become so prevalent that it is part of the residency culture
- Medical school environments are particularly vulnerable due to 1) prevalent use of MCQs; 2) pressures to do well; 3) heavy workload; and 4) student cohorts.

The Motivations of a Cheater

- It's simple: They want better grades!
- For most college students (broadly defined), cheating is more likely to occur when the stakes are higher for students; however, cheating is more likely to occur in professional programs, even when the stakes are low!
- In medical education, even routine classroom assessments may carry moderate-to-high stakes for students
- Cheating is more likely to occur when students experience anxiety (anxiety increases threat perception, which in turn often results in committing unethical acts)

Cheating as a Validity Threat

- Cheating...
 - Affects score meaning
 - Creates problems with fairness
 - Misrepresents what someone knows or can do
 - May be habit-forming and extend to other areas of life (e.g., workplace, home, etc.)





Make this test fridge worthy!

1) Edit

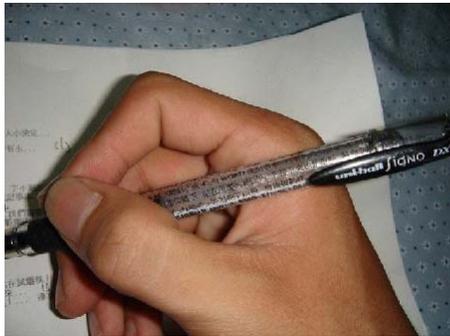
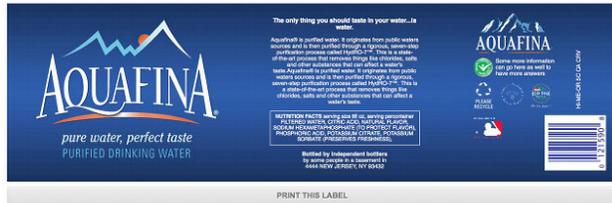
Enter your notes to your test below by typing in below

2) Print

Print in "landscape" mode on Sticky paper, cut, and apply to your waterbottle

3) Ace the test

Place bottle on desk and make your mama proud



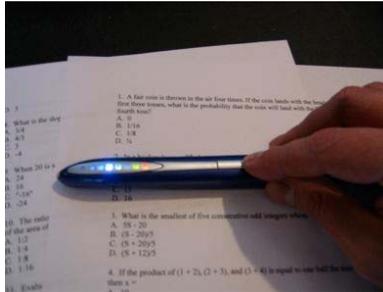
CHEAT



PEN



What's new in cheating technology?



The “10 Most Wanted” Cheaters in Medical Education

- To communicate the message we have generated a “10 Most Wanted” list comparable to those used by law enforcement agencies to track criminals
- Research in neuroscience education tells us: “If you want material to be remembered, then make it memorable!”
- So, here is a little experiment intended to help you remember these types of cheaters



“Smuggler”

This individual attempts to carry forbidden materials to an examination setting. Smugglers attempt to bring in a wide variety of contraband including:

- Cheat sheets
- Notes
- Formulas
- Electronic devices (ex., cameras), especially wireless technology that may be used to search the internet during an exam, etc.



“Tourists”

These individuals like to take in all the sights, especially in examination settings. Tourists are a constant threat to examination integrity. In order to copy answers they often use wondering eyes to:

- Discretely view a phone or other electronic device (ex. another student’s laptop); or
- Look for hidden notes under desk/chair, etc.

“The Incontinent”



This individual requires frequent restroom breaks during an examination, often to access unauthorized notes and materials. The incontinent knows surveillance in restrooms is off-limits, so s/he uses these safe zones to:

- Review notes written on body or concealed under clothing;
- Locate planted notes (e.g., concealing crib notes in rolls of bathroom tissue or ceiling tiles, restroom drop boxes); or
- Look up answers on prohibited electronic devices (phone, tablet, watch, pda, etc.).



“The Impersonator”

This individual may impersonate other students through a number of strategies:

- Forges the name of another student on a sign-in sheet;
- Shares electronic login information with absent students ensuring absentees receive credit for participation and performance;
- Presents a false ID or credential to a proctor in order to take an exam on another person’s behalf; or
- Exchanges answer sheets with another student and turns in another’s work.



“Hacker”

This individual is an ever-present threat, and poses a tremendous danger to exam security and integrity. Hackers may exploit vulnerabilities in software to unlawfully steal and/or:

- Download unauthorized materials, such as lecture videos, previous or current copies of exams;
- Tamper with or modifies a test; or
- Change/falsify students’ exam and/or course grades.



“Storytellers”

This individual attempts to share information, often innocently, with others who have yet to take an examination. In doing so, a Storyteller will destroy the integrity of an assessment.

Storytellers proliferate information – often times in performance-based settings (e.g., OSCEs) in which students are asked to work through a specific case or scenario and the whole class is unable to be tested at the same time.



“The Air Traffic Controller”

This individual:

- Directs traffic or distributes information on secret/private Facebook and social media sites where unauthorized materials appear;
- Instigates inappropriate discussions about exams on social media sites;
- Works work closely with *baggage handlers* (those who ensure there is plenty of precious cargo to go around); and
- Is particularly difficult to catch without the assistance of a rogue *pilot* (an individual who has visited the website) blowing a whistle.

Suggestion: routinely monitor the internet for your test materials.



“Collaborators”

It is often desirable for students to work in teams in educational settings, but this is not appropriate when we are evaluating individuals’ competence. Collaborators are a group of individuals who work together to:

- Memorize and record exam items (‘brain-dumps’); and
- Provide unauthorized assistance to one another before or during a test;
- Use various low tech signals (foot tapping, hand signals) to communicate answers.

“Empathizers”



Empathy is an important characteristic for any future medical professional; however, these individuals take the sentiment too far. This form of theft is particularly challenging to combat as many medical education programs have a long tradition of actually condoning these behaviors.

Empathizers (typically students from a previous year) are:

- Altruistic;
- Feel the pain of upcoming students; and
- Want to help make their lives easier by sharing exam items and other unauthorized materials.



“Robin Hood”

Sometimes well-intentioned instructors also participate in cheating. A Robin Hood is an instructor who provides an unfair assist to less competent students (often at the expense of others) in order to help inflate their scores. A Robin Hood may:

- Hint at, or lead students to a correct answer on an assessment;
- Provide inflated ratings;
- Change students’ scores;
- ‘Fix’ a recorded response for a poorer student; and/or
- Allow a re-test if a student complains of technical problems, illness, or other false excuse after receiving the exam score.

Conclusion

- There are many ways to cheat (high-tech, low-tech)
- May involve a single individual or multiple individuals
- Often occurs innocently; other times it is more deliberate
- Cheating is not limited to students; sometimes faculty and proctors can provide an unfair assist
- Remain vigilant and report any suspected acts of cheating to the Office of Academic Affairs

Questions?

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Also, please let me know if you would like access to the published article when it becomes available. Here is a quick citation:

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