

COMPUTER-BASED MCAT LAUNCHED; FIRST TEST-TAKERS REPORT CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS TO NEW FORMAT

FEW GLITCHES REPORTED, BUT STUDENTS FIND COMPUTERIZED FORMAT MORE CHALLENGING THAN ANTICIPATED, ACCORDING TO KAPLAN SURVEY

New York, NY (January 31, 2007) – Initial feedback from the first administrations of the new computerized Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), held on January 27 and 29, suggests that test-takers may find the fresh format harder to master than originally anticipated. And while the survey of Kaplan MCAT test takers revealed a generally positive experience for most, some students reported encountering technical and administrative snafus.

Most significantly, it was discovered that select tests from the January 27 administration included a mismatched passage text and question set in the Verbal Reasoning section, reportedly impacting an estimated 800 of the 2,500 test-takers. To address students' concerns, the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), the organization that creates and administers the MCAT, announced two options for students who were impacted:

- Sit tight** – AAMC is confident it can provide valid scores to the affected test-takers without using the erroneous questions.

- Void the test and obtain a full refund** – students who believe that their performance was significantly disrupted by this error will have this option. The \$210 registration amount can be applied to a later test date, and the voided test will not count towards the annual maximum of three tests taken.

Students who experienced this issue are encouraged to contact the AAMC section for examinee testing at (202) 828-0690 for more information.

"We are pleased that the AAMC made the right decision for students affected by the exam error and cautiously optimistic that moving forward these types of problems will be reduced," said Matt Fidler, MCAT program manager, Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions. "While most of our students reported positive experiences during this first ever large scale administration of the computer-based MCAT, future test-takers should always be prepared for potential glitches."

For example, he noted, a few students reported faulty passport scanners at their test sites, which led to ID problems, long lines, a delayed test start time, and shorter breaks between sections, as students needed to undergo a finger print scan each time they re-entered the room. To avoid this problem, Kaplan encourages students to bring multiple forms of identification like a driver's license or student ID with a photo.

Beyond the erroneous question and a few faulty scanners, Kaplan's survey results indicated relatively few glitches overall. However, feedback from test-takers of the first-ever computer-based MCAT administration revealed other interesting findings:

- Computer Practice is Critical:** Given a previous Kaplan survey in which over 80 percent of students reported never having taken a computerized exam, it's not surprising that 59 percent of students surveyed who took the new computerized MCAT said it was harder than they expected. In fact, 55 percent of test takers actually advise students to spend more time learning the new computer format than on learning test content (computer-based MCAT practice exams can be found at www.kaptest.com/mcat).

- Quality of Experience Drops:** On a scale of 1 (worst) to 5 (best), the percentage of Kaplan students grading their MCAT test experiences with a 4 or 5 declined from 80 percent (pre-computerized format) to 71 percent in the January (computer-based) administrations. 73 percent graded the functionality of the computers with either a 4 or 5.

•**Proctors Need Practice, Too:** Kaplan's survey also showed a decline in satisfaction with proctors: in the January administrations, 64 percent of students rated their test proctors a 4 or 5, compared to 83 percent in the previous (pre-computerized) administration. Complaints about proctors included poor attitude and incorrect information.

•**Planning Ahead Helps:** Despite initial concerns that the smaller pool of test sites – as limited by the new computer-equipped requirements for test administration – would create logistical challenges for students, 82 percent of Kaplan MCAT students reported traveling only 30 miles or less, with 86 percent saying the test site location was either convenient for them. This is probably due in no small part because 71 percent of students registered for the MCAT at least two months in advance, thereby reducing the risk of being locked out of their preferred testing sites.

The next MCAT administrations will take place in April, followed by administrations throughout the spring and summer. A recent Kaplan survey of college pre-med advisors revealed that April and May will be the most popular times for students to take the MCAT, followed by June and July. Because testing centers can only accommodate a limited number of students for each administration, Kaplan strongly encourages students to register for the MCAT as soon as registration opens to avoid being shut out of their preferred testing dates and testing sites.

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