

Surviving Clerkship – Tips and Advice

Your predecessors have put together some tips and advice which may serve as a series of rules for Clerkship:

- Know and respect your patients! They can teach you an enormous amount about life. They may not know much about medicine, but their concerns and fears are yours with which to help. Follow their problems as though they were your own, find out what happened to them through the night or over the weekend, and check on their most recent lab results.
- Always be on time! It is better to have to wait for the team than for the team to wait for you.
- Never be afraid to ask questions.
- Never be afraid to jump in and get your feet wet ... providing you know how to swim or there is a lifeguard nearby.
- Never forget that you can say that you don't know, but are willing to learn.
- Remember ... the nurses, ward secretaries and other health professionals can be your best friend or your worst enemy. Treat them with respect! Don't try to tell them how to do their jobs! The floor and services to which you will be assigned have existed for years and will continue to do so after you leave. If you find yourself in a conflict that cannot be resolved, talk it over with someone.
- Don't try to study everything. Reading up on what cases you admit to hospital is easier. This way, you'll look brilliant on team rounds the next day!
- If you read too much, you will forget everything.
- Remember that you have a life outside of clerkship. When you have a night off, GO OUT! Spend time with friends, go out on dates and talk about something other than medicine. Be sure to continue with your personal life and take care of yourself. Continue with your regular activities and exercise!
- Above all, remember that clerkship is a time to have some fun ... enjoy it!

On-Call Tips

- Don't panic!!
- You are never *really* alone when on call; if you're not sure about something speak with the resident who is on-call with you, or the consultant.
- Nurses are a great source of information.
- You don't need to bring every text book you own with you when you're on-call. All you really need is common sense.
- Buy yourself a little black book to write down those "little pearls of wisdom" you pick up along the way.
- Before going to bed, go around to all the nurses' stations of the patients for whom you are responsible to ask if you can do anything (writing orders for bedtime sedation, analgesia, etc). It is better to do this before you go to sleep than at 0300 in the morning.
- On the first day on any new rotation, find out where the emergency room is and how to get there quickly because you will be going there when you are on-call.
- Know where the x-ray department is and how to get to your call room easily.
- Take everything you'll need to look and feel presentable for the next day in the hospital (shampoo, soap, deodorant, razor, etc)
- Most cafeterias close around 1830 hrs and you might not get there before it closes. Carry change for the vending machines.