

**Srishti:**

Hello everyone! Congratulations on completing your first unit of medical school! Finishing MCM was no small feat and I hope you all got the chance to catch your breath and relax before your next unit. I found FSC to be much more manageable in terms of workload compared to MCM. There are fewer required sessions, and you'll find more time on your hands that you'll be able to manage however you like. I'd highly recommend taking the extra time to explore Syracuse, go apple picking, go hiking with friends, try some new hobbies, and strike that elusive balance that we are all striving for. Remember that this is a marathon, and not a sprint. We've all been in the position of choosing between studying all day or taking care of ourselves. Use this time to find a routine that works best for you in the long run! Anyway, I'll get off my soap box and start with FSC advice.

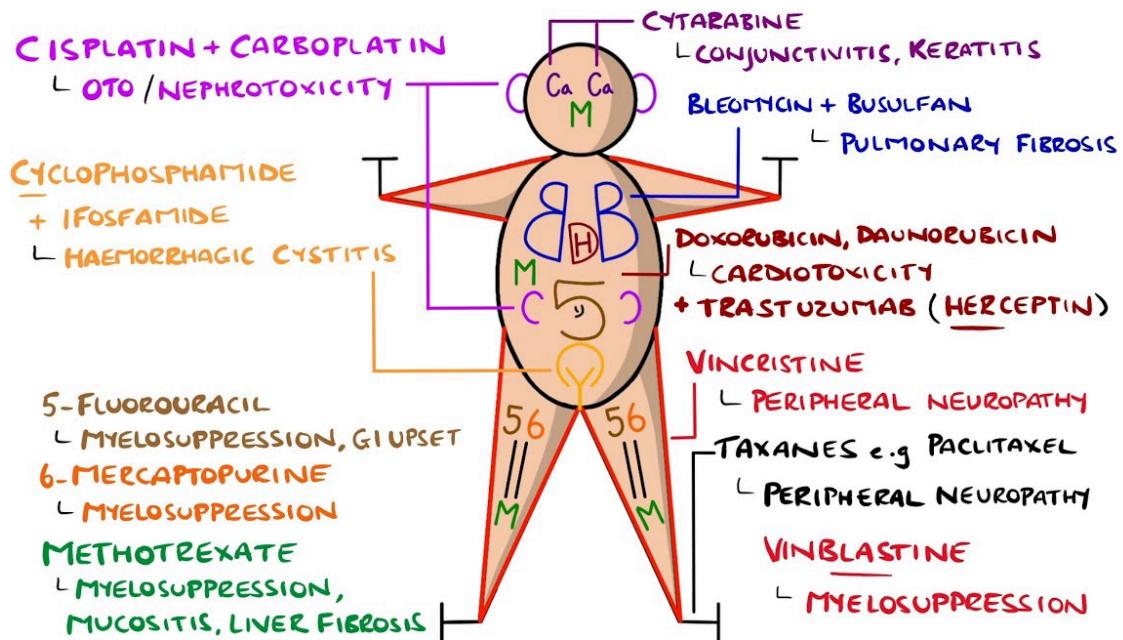
Hopefully during MCM you experimented with different study methods. Maybe you found some that worked for you, or maybe you're still figuring it out. I would say if you didn't do as well as you'd hoped on the MCM exam, now is the time to try out a new method. I found FSC to still be more Upstate-specific, but there were definitely some opportunities to use third party resources that really paid off for quizzes and the exam. If your studying methods in MCM worked well, keep doing what you're doing!

If you use the Anking deck in Anki, I would recommend keeping up with your cards from MCM and not suspending them. It will be painful to keep seeing the antibiotics and topics you want to get away from, but trust me, learning that information well right now will save you so much time later. I still remember the antibiotics from MCM because I didn't suspend my Sketchy Anking cards. Also, if you used Joe's deck during MCM, I would recommend giving Anking a try. MCM was very Upstate-specific so I understand leaning more on Joe's deck then, but moving forward, it will become easier to try to incorporate Step 1 material into your Upstate exam studying. The Anking deck is just better formatted for rapid studying and long-term retention (not knocking Joe, just speaking from my own experience). There is definitely a steep learning curve with navigating the Anking deck and tags, but investing that time now will pay off. If you have questions with how to use Anking, please let me know and I'd be happy to help!

Here is what I did to be successful in FSC:

- The principles of neoplasia/growth adaptation/inflammation foundational pathology lectures are **very high yield**, for both Upstate material and Step 1. Make sure you have a solid understanding of grade vs. stage, metaplasia vs. dysplasia vs. hyperplasia, etc. I would recommend taking your time going through Chapters 1-3 of Pathoma, they are pretty well correlated to Dr. Ross's Upstate lectures and the gold standard for understanding the material at the level of Step 1.
- If you mainly use 3rd party resources, try to keep up with Upstate lectures during the week still. Upstate threw some random lectures into FSC that don't quite fit into other units. Skimming through the slides of these lower yield lectures the night before the exam helped me get a few extra questions correct.

- Find the Robbins Pathology textbook (**Not robins**) in the google drive and do the questions on relevant chapters. A few exam questions are definitely taken from this book.
- Microanatomy begins this unit – use Joe's deck for microanatomy/do the practice practical on Brightspace before your practical exam and you'll do great (the questions are usually just recognizing cell types and such).
- The chemotherapy drugs were thrown at us the week before the exam, and it was brutal. I personally skipped the lectures and only watched Sketchy and did the corresponding anki, which worked out well for me. The biggest concept with these drugs is knowing which classes cause which side effects. This chemotherapy man is high yield.



- Dr. Stork's and Dr. Iannolo's pharmacology lectures were definitely tested on the exam. Take your time understanding the formulas and working through the case problems on your own after lecture. In my opinion Boards & Beyond or another third party explain basic pharmacology principles better than the Upstate lectures, so I'd recommend those or a separate youtube video for your foundational understanding. You will definitely be doing some simple math on the test unfortunately, but you'll have a calculator on ExamSoft and some pen and paper.
- The dermatology lectures are incredibly long – don't get too caught up in the details of everything. Know how to distinguish the different rashes, macules, papules, bullae, etc. If you're crunched for time, focus on psoriasis and acne. Pemphigus vulgaris vs. bullous pemphigoid is important. Look through the slides for review, or use 3rd party to focus on high yield conditions.
- AOA questions are chef's kiss this unit, definitely try to get through them the week of the exam.

- These spreadsheets are helpful for guiding 3rd party study:
  - + Copy of Copy of Upstate Resource Schedule (diff layout)
- + Copy of 3rd Party Resource Schedule

You guys will do great! Keep up with your work but make use of your extra free time to enjoy yourselves. Please reach out if you have specific questions! ([tyagis@upstate.edu](mailto:tyagis@upstate.edu))

Omair:

Congratulations on finishing your first full block of med school! I hope you all enjoyed your week after MCM to have a little break from school. Regardless of how MCM went for you, I am proud of y'all -- getting into med school and adjusting to it is no easy feat!

FSC is overall pretty chill. This is the first unit where third-party resources become much more relevant. Everyone is different in how/when they start to incorporate these. Some people used third-party as much as possible and pretty much ignored Upstate lectures (I personally fell into this camp), some continued to study primarily from Upstate lectures like with MCM, and some did both to get two passes. At this stage of medical school, in my opinion, third-party resources should just be that - resources to help you pass Upstate stuff. It just happens to be that a lot of Step 1 resources explain the material much better than Upstate lectures do. I will add at the end of the FSC-specific advice a guide that more generally explains what the resources are (apologies for its lengthiness, but I hope it is helpful and comprehensive for you all!)

Overall, what works for you in MCM will also work in FSC. In terms of high-yield third-party resources, Srishti above did a great job summarizing what covers the unit! However, even if you're someone who wants to use primarily Upstate lectures, here are the resources I think you should do instead of the lectures because it's just so so much clearer (at least IMO):

The other thing I recommend to pretty much everyone is doing more practice questions, as Upstate has been making a much more calculated effort to make Step-like questions for their unit exams than in previous years, and doing practice questions will help make those questions easier to answer. Unfortunately, professors do not provide as many practice questions as they did in MCM. Upstate gives UWorld and Kaplan access, which are both great resources for

pracdtice questions. You can find questions by sorting by topic (e.g. for FSC, use the general principles of pathology and pharmacology and/or dermatology). You can also use the Rubins pathology textbook to find more questions, and that PDF should be in the drive (and I'm sure someone in your class will share it in the discord) I know the resources can be overwhelming, so if you do plan on using them, I have a guide at the end of the FSC specific advice giving a quick recap of what each one is for. And of course, you can always reach out to me if you have questions!

In terms of pacing, because your guys' quizzes do not count, I highly recommend spending time at the beginning of the unit (prolly after the neuro quiz) just making a list of whatever lectures and/or secondary resources you would like to use and dividing it equally. There are some weeks where there are very few lectures and some where there are 13 or more, and it might be better to divide that up more evenly if that's your thing. Or you can also just go by the formative assessment schedule too if that's your thing. But figured I'd throw this out there!

You guys also start microanatomy/histology for the first time and it is pretty laid-back. There is pre-work assigned before a micro lab, but to be honest, it's not a big deal if you do not get it to it before lab, as they just go over everything in lab anyways. (Just make sure to do the lecture + Joe's deck before the practical and final because the prework is fair game for both of those.) You then spend an hour or so looking at the lab guide and/or virtual images identifying different structures, and then you take a short quiz afterward which is usually pretty easy. There are some pretty good Anki decks from previous classes as well which should be in the class drive. I have also heard that microanatomy is really good on Bootcamp (another third-party resource) but I have never personally used Bootcamp for micro.

Unrelated to school, this in general is a beautiful time of year in Upstate NY, so make sure to take breaks from school to go take some trips to the lakes, or a daytrip to the Adirondacks, go apple picking (I highly recommend Beak and Skiff), go to a pumpkin patch, etc. because the fall colors are an awesome time. You guys are going to kill it! Please feel free to text me if you have any questions at all about med school.

-Omair  
607-738-8313

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Here's a more general guide to what on earth all the third-party resources are!

Boards and Beyond (BNB) -- This covers everything -- anatomy, physiology, pathology, pharm (though in practice, people rarely use it for pharm). These are pretty good videos, and there are relevant AnKing tags for each video that are well-tagged. However, they are not as well tagged as Pathoma and Sketchy imo, and it might be worth downloading the Lightyear deck (which you can find on Reddit) if you find that you are a really big BNB fan and want to use it for the majority of your material.

Bootcamp -- Bootcamp is similar to BNB in terms of covering everything. I didn't use Bootcamp that much except to fill in gaps that other resources don't cover during MS1, but I have been using it more this year and it has honestly been a lifesaver. The videos are well-made with corresponding AnKing cards as well as question banks on the website, which helps you test yourself to see if you absorbed what the videos were saying. There are also great practice questions for microanatomy and gross anatomy (which you won't start until MSK in November). Unfortunately, these videos are not in the drive like other resources, but you can just keep making free trials to access the materials as needed.

Costanzo -- This is a textbook for physiology specifically. I personally think it is a fantastic physiology resource for units such as cardio, pulm, repro, and renal because it has a lot of great practice questions and Upstate pulls heavily from those chapters (the professors literally use diagrams from Costanzo in their lectures). I think it was probably also useful for some of the muscle physiology in MSK, but I didn't discover Costanzo yet so I cannot confirm. The textbook is one of the most clear textbooks I have ever read, but if you want to watch videos, there is a youtube series called Teach Me This! Costanzo which has someone narrate the high-yield points from each chapter. The AnKing cards are generally well tagged.

Pathoma -- Pathoma for many is the golden standard for the pathology portions of each block. It does a great job IMO at explaining certain pathologies in a way that helps make things stick (or at the very least, a better job than the in-house lectures....). I also felt that Pathoma was well-aligned with Upstate lectures, to the point that I was able to basically skip the in-house lectures for pathology. However, Pathoma does miss some diseases that I did have to supplement with BNB or Bootcamp.

Sketchy -- This is the golden standard for bugs and drugs. Bugs and drugs are rote memorization, and for a lot of people, creating a memory palace with cute little cartoons to remember things >>> trying to memorize random words from a table. Make sure to do the corresponding AnKing cards to reinforce the images, as that is what will help the information stick. Also, if you used the antibiotic sketches during MCM and weren't a fan, I would still recommend giving sketchy a try again because the antibiotics sketches are not the best ones out there (looking at you, macrolides poetry). There are different Sketchy resources:

-SketchyMicro is for all the bugs (e.g. bacteria, viruses, fungi, parasites, etc.). Probably the best Sketchy videos IMO as they are short and sweet and the memory devices hit hard

-SketchyPharm is for the pharm, but the videos often double dip and also teach normal physiology, so it often is also a nice way to tie the "normal" and "abnormal" together later in the block.

-SketchyPath is less commonly used (I never used it), but it's a great resource (along with Pixorize) when pathologies just really aren't clicking and you need it explained to you in another way. In general, I would use this as a supplement to hammer in

you-know-it-or-you-don't details AFTER using another resource to first understand the more conceptual aspects of diseases.

Pixorize -- Another sketchy type resource, but IMO is probably better for rote memorization topics involving specific diseases that involve rote memorization, biochem, and immunology. For example, it's a great resource to remember the random interleukins from MCM, or delineate between clinical presentations of different pathologies if Pathoma/Bootcamp/BNB + practice questions isn't doing it for you. I didn't discover pixorize until later, so I unfortunately don't have much guidance for FSC specifically, but sketchy/pathoma/BNB did the trick well for FSC. In general, I would use this as a supplement to hammer in you-know-it-or-you-don't details AFTER using another resource to first understand the more conceptual aspects of diseases.

First Aid -- This book is a summary of all the boards topics that you can think of. This is more of a tool to refer to after you have learned a topic/done the anki/done practice question as a refresher, rather than a primary learning tool. I honestly don't think First Aid will be relevant for a while, except maybe as a high-yield read right before the unit exam.

I want to emphasize that you should *not* be using all of these resources -- you merely need to experiment with them and see which ones are the most useful for you for different topics if you decide to use secondary resources. In other words, if you watched the Pathoma video on pemphigus vulgaris vs. bullous pemphigoid, there is no reason to also watch the BNB video in it -- just go with the resource you like the best!

Question banks -- I think for you guys, doing practice questions from third-party qbanks will be more important than for previous classes because Upstate has begun to make a bigger effort to make unit exams more in line with what is testable for Step. In general, these qbanks will help with lecture material (i.e. not as much gross anatomy or microanatomy). To quickly summarize some of the qbanks out there:

-UWorld: The "gold standard" of board prep questions -- it is up to you whether or not to save these questions for when you get closer to Step or if you want to do some of them now. UWorld questions have been pulled verbatim for our pulmonary, renal, and endocrine units, so it definitely would not hurt to do them! Like AMBOSS, these are pretty difficult so don't get discouraged by low scores -- use it as a learning tool as the explanations are quite good. There is also an add-on to pull AnKing cards that are related to each UWorld question you do.

-Kaplan: Another question bank that Upstate gave us. Some of the questions are weirdly worded, honestly, but Upstate straight up pulls questions from Kaplan for the unit exams, and the Kaplan questions help test whether or not you can apply Anki knowledge to questions.

-AMBOSS: This is what I personally used during MS1. These questions are hard, but I have found that they helped me understand classic disease presentations that you need to know to answer questions on Upstate (and board) exams. There is a convenient add-on where you can use Anking cards to create a question bank for yourself, or you can just create a question bank

by topic. In addition to practice questions, there's a lot of good articles for when you need a refresh or summary of a topic, an add-on to define random words you find scrolling the web/on your anki cards, and even an add-on to ask questions to ChatGPT that use amboss info for greater accuracy. It is a hefty price, but I found it worth it. Likely there will eventually be a class discount to take advantage of. However, Upstate gives you two other Qbanks so I definitely don't think it's the end of the world to not have this.

-USMLE-Rx: I don't personally use this because I didn't want to buy another QBank, but I have heard from friends of mine at other schools that this is a relatively straightforward qbank compared to Kaplan that helps reinforce material from the third-party resources.

Note on AnKing: Everyone is a little different in how much they keep up with their AnKing. Like Srishti, I personally have been keeping up with it since MCM and I agree with her. However, I know many, many people who didn't do that either and were just fine for Step 1, so if you find that it is too overwhelming to keep up with all of that, don't feel like you have to. Your biggest priority should be learning the material well the first time so that down the line, you only have to refresh rather than re-learn. Suspend Joe's MCM cards, and use Joe's deck sparingly going forward.

Note on using primarily third-party: If you plan on barely using Upstate lectures, just understand that there will be questions that show up on the exams where you have to take a calculated L. Everyone is different with their comfort levels on that, so if you want the most leeway possible, it is probably a good idea to review all the Upstate lectures at least once and make cards/notes on stuff that isn't in the resources of your choice.