**Board style item writing tips**

1. There aren’t questions specifically asking about basic science. Instead, questions are written as a clinical scenario. The question then may relate to a specific subject (e.g., biochemistry, anatomy, histology, pharmacology, pathology etc).
   1. For example, I might give a clinical scenario and then ask the diagnosis or specifics about the patient’s diagnosis (e.g., pathogenesis, complications, etiologic agent if infectious, prognosis, etcetera)
   2. One can use this principle in the various subjects
      1. Pharmacology:
         1. For example, one might state that a patient is given drug “X”
            1. Can ask what the drug is used to treat or ask what the mechanism of action is or major side effects?
         2. Conversely, one might describe a clinical situation and ask about treatment or drug/drug class used?
      2. Anatomy:
         1. Give clinical manifestations/diagnosis
            1. Can ask about the structures affected/involved in the process (e.g., what nerve is involved, what artery is involved, what bone is involved, etcetera).
      3. Biochemistry:
         1. Given clinical manifestations/diagnosis
            1. Which enzyme is deficient?
            2. Which compound is increased decreased, etcetera?
      4. Histology: what cell structure is abnormal
      5. Genetics: what is the gene affected
      6. Molecular: what is the molecular pathway affected
      7. Microbiology:
         1. Might give a clinical scenario and then ask about characteristics of the most common etiologic agent
            1. e.g., ask characteristics of *S. aureus* in a typical case of infectious endocarditis
2. Should be one correct answer -- no ‘all of the above’, ‘none of the above’, ‘all except’, etc.
   1. Use 5 answer choices.
   2. Choices should all be plausible (i.e., not obviously wrong)
   3. Don’t include extraneous information – this just confuses students without evaluating their knowledge base.
   4. Answer choices should all be of relatively similar length, of same tense as the question stem, etc (the correct answer shouldn’t be obvious).
3. Don’t teach in the question (e.g., don’t say “Patient is a 56-year-old male with diabetes mellitus, a disorder of glucose metabolism, who presents with…”). Students should know that DM is a disorder of glucose metabolism.
4. Don’t give every single manifestation of disease – pick a few (after all, most real-life disorders don’t have a textbook presentation).
5. Reread another day, I often realize that the question was too easy, too hard, didn’t make sense, etc.