BECOMING A DRUG EXPERT REQUIRES:

- Motivation to learn
- Establishing a study method
- Effortful study
- Addressing and correcting misconceptions
- Self-regulation and monitoring of learning progress

1. Attend scheduled lectures
- Engage while in class
- Make note of points emphasized in lectures/tutorials for future reference
- Coloured pens or highlighters help me to remember and relocate the information readily
- Identify and record questions and points needing clarification

2. Assess congruency of information
- Review lecture notes, literature, and other supplementary material simultaneously
- Verify congruence between lecture material, what the professor has said, and outside resources.
- If incongruent:
  - Review additional material and verify understanding
  - If required, seek expert opinion from professors
  - Determine if misconception(s) exists and address if necessary

3. Ask questions
- Ask yourself:
  - Does the information make sense?
  - Is it consistent with prior knowledge and conceptions?
- Ask your peers:
  - Collaborate to verify understanding and sort out any misconceptions
- Ask your professors:
  - Get to know your professors; they are always more than happy to offer support. They appreciate students’ expressed interest in truly understanding the material

4. Integrate and synthesize material
- Review notes from different courses simultaneously
- Integrate and synthesize the information into a complete picture of the topic or disease state
- Identify areas that require clarification
- Through multiple iterations, create a comprehensive overview (e.g. point-form notes, a flow chart, or a table)
  - I call these my ‘Ninja Notes’, because they represent a quick, comprehensive resource that I can reflect back on as needed
  - Typical questions I ask myself at this stage include:
    - How does the pharmacology of the drug relate to the pathophysiology of the disease?
    - How do patient-specific characteristics factor in to your drug therapy selection?
- I try to be realistic and recognize the fact that time does not always permit the type of thorough review I would like. Prioritize your studying when there is a time crunch

5. Revisit and review
- Understand why and how answers are what they are as opposed to simply memorizing what an answer is
- For example, in the treatment of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD):
  - Why are antacids used for acute treatment over proton pump inhibitors?
  - Which medication(s) in the treatment of GERD would you avoid in an elder patient with reduced renal function?
  - The list of questions and concepts is vast, so it may be most efficient to focus on the key points (especially those you emphasized during lectures) in the topic material

6. Gauge Progress
- Complete all assignments (these are a great way of assessing your level of knowledge and understanding)
- Allow time to review before exams; complete practice questions if available
- After completing an exam, ask yourself:
  - Was I able to recognize concepts when presented in a novel context?
  - How readily was I able to recall information necessary to answer the questions?
  - Was there difficulty in recalling specific details?

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