

Hello Brainiacs

And here is Brain Byte 3 (or maybe 2b). Here are the breakout answers to Brain Byte 2, with detail and descriptors added by all of you. For those who were at INS, great to see you there!

In addition, we asked "What was the biggest obstacle to your success in passing the written exam, and were there resources you wished you had utilized more or that you needed and were not available to you?"

There were a number of free form responses to this question, and the full condensed list is included in the Table 1 below. In distilled form, there are a few responses that we wish to highlight. The themes that come through these comments, include 1) wrong study material or not enough time/organization for study, 2) content of exam questions – detail and specialization required, and 3) in exam test taking strategies and anxiety management.

Finally, for this section we asked "Did you change anything about your preparation for the written exam, and if so, were you successful on a subsequent attempt?"

In a follow-up question, we queried what specific strategies were used in retaking, and if/whether they are successful. As before, the full listing is below in Table 2. These are reduced into some themes. First, there were some people who studied more, used better materials, and yet still have not yet passed. Second, of those who were successful in a second attempt, the strategies for success included the same themes as those mentioned above. Content, time, test taking strategy were helpful steps for some people to pass on the second or third time. There was also some notes from those who have not yet taken the test a second time, with some sense that the measures/ABPP exam were not closely matched to their work/interests.

Table 1. Biggest Obstacle to Your Success in Passing the Written Exam

Index	Comment	Number of comments	Additional comments
1.	Lack of exposure / approach	2	I am a pediatric psychologist and work in a non academic setting. My lack of work exposure to the material I was responsible for learning made it difficult to acquire master enough additional knowledge to pass.
			I studied more from an academic/neuro-anatomy approach with not enough connection to clinical syndromes.
2.	Confusing multiple choice	2	

	questions/ need more practice with MCQ's		
3.	My anxiety (Problem)	2	I had tremendous test anxiety, and needed to pay more attention to detail. I wish I had worked with a mentor in addition to the study group. My colleagues in the study group were great, but I often got flustered if I thought I was not as well prepared. The mentor I worked with for oral preparation helped me with the anxiety so that could think clearer.
4.	Followed study schedule, which worked/ (Time)	2	
5.	More rigorous preparation	2	better idea of what to study for. field way too broad to study everything
6.	Book was helpful (Morgan and Ricker)	1	
7.	Personal stressors	2	Personal stressors - death, complicated pregnancy, surgery, job change...
8.	More Practice exams	1	
9.	Lack of organization/ study time (I was too busy)	6	Organization/study time. I didn't study the first time and missed it by 2 points. I had great resources, but the process just got away from me.
			Biggest obstacle was both time demand for studying and knowing which content to cover. I agree with recent statements on the BRAIN listserv that some questions on the written appear more intent on testing esoteric knowledge than that typically experienced in daily clinical practice.
			Time to study areas not relevant to my job (e.g., dementias)
10.	Poor questions / Difficult questions.	6	Poor questions -- with no discoverable/clearly correct answer (my score was 69) on at least 5 or 6 questions.
			The level of detail needed to successfully pass the exam was difficult to predict.
			Taking the test itself. There were many questions that I could narrow down the answer to two responses but the amount

			of detail was a challenge.
			the esoteric questions asked, that regardless of the amount of studying, would have never been covered because the questions were so specialized and only a subspecialists would know the answers.
			Incredible breadth & depth of exam -- too many esoteric, too highly specialized questions for irrelevant concepts (I'm remembering crazy stats/facts that I'd never seen/used -- though I took about 20 credits worth of stats classes) and rare diseases/disorders.
11	Other	4	
			Over-studying of anatomy to the exclusion of statistical concepts and psychopathology. I needed to go back and re-study DSM and stats books.
			I would prefer to have study materials, specialty clinical modules available that are similar to what the physicians have who are studying for their Boards such as: http://www.abpn.com/moc_products.asp , https://mocmatters.abms.org/default.aspx . I LOVED preparing for my licensure exam because I attended lectures, did online exams, and had written materials that were excellent, and accurate. While I reviewed numerous textbooks in my preparation for the 1st time hat I took the exam, I missed by passing by 13 points. I will use a different approach this time, but I would welcome good study materials. Now to find the time....
			rethinking my answers - I missed it by 1 point the first time
			First attempt score was 69.

Table 2. Changes in Preparation for the Written Exam and Subsequent Outcome

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1.	Did not pass in subsequent attempts	3	I missed the first time by one point. I took it the second time without studying at all foolishly thinking I could pass it on rebound. I got an even lower score. I just took it for the third time after studying intensively for 5 months and with a study group. I felt prepared but the questions seemed increasingly difficult and obscure each time I took the test. I was devastated to learn that I did not pass the third time but not surprised because it was a much harder test.
			Used more of BRAIN study materials & still failed
			i studied longer for the second exam and much more in depth. still got the same score
2.	Successful second attempt	3	Successful on 2nd attempt.
			no I didn't change anything in particular although I had time to make more flash cards; yes I was successful on my second attempt
			Yes, I was successful on 2nd attempt, but felt worse about my performance coming out of it than the first time (felt pretty confident first time around, but missed the mark by 1 point)
3.	Preparation: Book	4	Read basic material Kolb and Whishaw.
			I went back to the basics-Lezak.
			I needed to go back and re-study DSM and stats books. Yes, passed the second time.
			I re-read the books from the first time, took a different attitude about studying, focused more on the practice tests
4.	Practice on stats	1	More practice on stats and neurotransmitters
5.	More practice on MCQ's	1	More practice on MC questions.
6.	More practice with flash cards/ interactive learning/ organized learning	3	Consulted w mentor. Did not use study group. More use of flash cards. Practiced making diagrams and charts.
			I set up and stuck with a more intense study schedule, used flashcards, and went to the test solo rather than with my study group friends. I did not make the same sorts of comparisons and had a better handle on my anxiety. I passed.
			I have changed to a more syndrome organized method of study we will see how that works out.
			Instead of just reading a lot, I took notes and drew hierarchies of the information in order to consolidate it.

7.	Joined study group	1	Yes, I joined a study group which helped me to talk through the different topics instead of studying on my own
8.	More time to preparation	3	Trying to give myself more time. So much to learn.
			Studied more. Passed on third attempt.
			I initially took it off the cuff, then I studied for 12 weeks, and finally gave myself 6 months to study.
9.	Preparation: Practice tests / study material	2	Yes and yes. I focused almost exclusively on the practice examinations and used them to identify what areas needed the most attention. Then, I used the study materials I had to bolster those areas. I set aside time to study in the few weeks heading int the exam.
			Took more practice exams, reviewed material that I felt weaker on.
10.	No changes to preparation	1	No -- didn't change anything. But I do think that the 2nd exam version was substantially easier.
11.	Haven't taken again	3	Haven't taken it again yet. Am memorizing facts in areas not relevant to my work.
			not attempted again yet.