Media and Book Reviews

WEB SITE REVIEW: NeuroPrep

As those of us who have recently studied for any of the US medical licensing examinations know, the use of online question banks has become almost as ubiquitous as traditional books and notes when studying for standardized examinations. These structured online quizzes allow us to actively learn the required material while simultaneously assessing how we might perform on the upcoming test. One of the best-known question banks for neurology is NeuroPrep (<http://www.neuroprep.com/>). Those who have trained with question banks in the past will likely turn to this program to help prepare for future neurology inservice training examinations and boards.

While there is no perfect study guide, the quality of a question bank can be measured against certain ideals.¹ Software should be easy to navigate, and permit a review of strengths and weaknesses to guide future studying. The topics covered in the question bank should be proportionate to those covered on the examinations. Questions should be well phrased, of appropriate difficulty, and accompanied by detailed answers. NeuroPrep strives to meet these ideals with varying degrees of success.

The user interface for NeuroPrep's Web site is fairly intuitive. Like other popular question banks, questions can be accessed either in a tutorial or test mode. The tutorial mode allows a review of answers during the session, whereas the test mode saves the review of answers for the session's end. Either way, the examinee can select questions based on category (e.g., "anatomy"), whether the questions have been answered in the past, and level of difficulty. The program then presents the user with a customized test. The user can type and save notes regarding each question throughout the process, and review both correct and incorrect answers.

NeuroPrep provides over 700 questions for residents to review. These can be divided into 8 categories for more focused studying. These categories mirror those of the residency inservice training examinations, with the sole exclusion of "contemporary issues," which only comprises 3% of the RITE in 2012.² The proportions of the categories seem approximately equal to the RITE, though radiology and to a lesser extent physiology seem underrepresented. While it is convenient to be able to focus an examination on certain categories, NeuroPrep

offers no clear way to compare percentages of correct answers by category to help determine which subjects require more attention. Instead, a review of past performance simply charts the percentage of total questions answered correctly, with a comparison to scores of other users of NeuroPrep answering the same questions.

While NeuroPrep offers plenty of questions, quality of the questions may be more important than quantity. Writing a good test question is difficult—one must avoid ambiguity while still permitting confusion. Subtleties in phrasing may lead to unintended misinterpretations that make more than one answer equally likely. While most NeuroPrep questions avoid this trap, others are less clear. Additionally, a student would hope that the questions being provided in the question bank are of a comparable level of difficulty, or slightly harder, than those asked in the examination. I believe NeuroPrep accomplishes this successfully overall, though individual questions may range from overly simple to unrealistically arcane. In any case, the answers provided are reliably detailed enough to encourage a deeper understanding of the material. The explanations would be even more helpful if they provided reasons why distracting choices are incorrect in addition to explaining why a particular answer is best.

NeuroPrep aims to provide the best online question bank for neurology examinations, and has succeeded, albeit largely by default as there is minimal electronic competition. More residents and students could be tempted to pay for this resource if it provided the additional benefit of gauging performance in different categories, included more radiologic images, and had more consistent question quality. Despite these deficiencies, NeuroPrep remains a highly useful adjunct study tool for those who appreciate question-and-answer learning.

Reviewed by Peter Pressman, MD

Dr. Pressman serves on the editorial team of the Resident & Fellow Section of Neurology® and is the Web Guide to Neurology on About.com. Go to [Neurology.org](http://www.aan.com/globals/axon/assets/8894.pdf) for full disclosures.

Copyright © 2012 by AAN Enterprises, Inc.

REFERENCES

1. Hammoud MM, Barclay ML. Development of a Web-based question database for students' self-assessment. *Acad Med* 2002;77:925.
2. American Academy of Neurology. Overall RITE Blueprint for 2012. Available at: <http://www.aan.com/globals/axon/assets/8894.pdf>. Accessed January 13, 2012.

Neurology®

Media and Book Reviews: Web Site Review: NeuroPrep

Peter Pressman

Neurology 2012;78:e115

DOI 10.1212/WNL.0b013e318253d68c

This information is current as of April 30, 2012

Updated Information & Services	including high resolution figures, can be found at: http://n.neurology.org/content/78/18/e115.full
References	This article cites 1 articles, 0 of which you can access for free at: http://n.neurology.org/content/78/18/e115.full#ref-list-1
Subspecialty Collections	This article, along with others on similar topics, appears in the following collection(s): All Education http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/all_education Computer use in education http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/computer_use_in_education Methods of education http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/methods_of_education Other Education http://n.neurology.org/cgi/collection/other_education
Permissions & Licensing	Information about reproducing this article in parts (figures,tables) or in its entirety can be found online at: http://www.neurology.org/about/about_the_journal#permissions
Reprints	Information about ordering reprints can be found online: http://n.neurology.org/subscribers/advertise

Neurology® is the official journal of the American Academy of Neurology. Published continuously since 1951, it is now a weekly with 48 issues per year. Copyright Copyright © 2012 by AAN Enterprises, Inc.. All rights reserved. Print ISSN: 0028-3878. Online ISSN: 1526-632X.