AN OVERVIEW OF THE DATs

Introduction:

The American Dental Association prints a yearly guide to the Dental Admission Test (DAT) and a careful reading of this document should be your first step in understanding the components of the test. The introductory section of the guide explains that, “The DAT is conducted by the American Dental Association (ADA) for applicants seeking admission to dental school. The DAT is designed to measure general academic ability, comprehension of scientific information, and perceptual ability. The DAT is administered year and while all dental schools require applicants to participate in the DAT Program, test results are only one factor considered in evaluating applicant admission potential. Validity studies have shown that test scores in conjunction with academic records are useful in predicting performance in dental school. The relative importance of these predictors in the admission process is determined by each dental school.” (http://www.ada.org/~/media/ADA/Education%20and%20Careers/Files/dat_examinee_guide.ashx)

TIMING OF THE DAT

It’s generally best to take the DAT as close to the time you complete the required coursework as possible. Waiting for a year or more between the time you finish your science pre-requisites (biology, general chemistry, organic chemistry) and the DAT test date isn’t recommended, as your knowledge of these subjects may fade. Conversely, taking the exam too early also has its drawbacks and you shouldn’t take the exam if you haven’t completed the required courses or had adequate time to prepare for the exam.

PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

There are several ways to prepare for the DAT and it makes sense to think carefully about how you study best, where you’ll be preparing for the exam and what else you’ll be doing during your DAT prep time. In short, there is no “one size fits all” answer to the question “How do I study for the DATs?”

As far as what prep materials are best, the Health Professions Program at Middlebury does not endorse any one approach or test prep company over another, but simply provides you with information that allows you to make an informed decision.

✔ The ADA sells a number of test prep materials
✔ CrackDat
✔ Kaplan Prep
✔ Khan Academy (free of charge) has a number of chemistry, organic chemistry and biology videos online that can help you work through difficult concepts
✔ Princeton Review

It’s easy to get caught up in wondering, which prep company is “the best”, or spend a lot of time looking at testimonials promising high scores and guaranteed success. The bottom line is that all test prep programs have fairly similar information, study modules, and practice exams, and success ultimately comes down to the amount of time one actually spends studying and taking practice exams. Good Luck!!!