Dear Class of 2023:

Welcome from the faculty and staff of The Practice of Medicine (POM) I course. This letter addresses students’ most commonly asked questions about purchasing medical equipment.

We will have a two-hour medical equipment fair shortly after you arrive in August. Several equipment vendors will offer medical equipment options (stethoscopes, diagnostic sets, tuning forks, etc.,) for you to try along with a question and answer session. These vendors offer a one-time a year bulk order to provide discounts to your class as a group. If you decide to order from them, you will have your equipment in time for POM. If you wish to purchase your medical equipment prior to your arrival, the following is our summary of medical equipment facts:

- The primary goal of the Clinical Skills segment of POM is teaching the techniques, rationale, and logical steps of interviewing and examining a patient.

- **Stethoscope:** **You will need to buy one.** The Littman Cardiology IV and the Master Cardiology both work well. You will see Cardiologists here using both. ADC also makes a perfectly acceptable stethoscope for the student on a more limited budget without sacrificing quality.

- A student with a complete diagnostic set (*ophthalmoscope and otoscope*) is more prepared than one without a complete set. **You are strongly recommended to buy one.** Owning a diagnostic set lets you practice at your personal convenience and pace. Looking at the optic fundus is one of the most challenging physical exam skills to learn and you cannot become facile unless you practice a lot outside of class. If you do not acquire one early in your training, odds are you will not feel comfortable using one by the time you start clerkships. Nasal scope attachments are not required or generally necessary.

- **Reflex hammer and tuning forks:** We refer you to a note from Dr. Allyson Zazulia, Neurology Course Director, with her thoughts on these:
  - **You will need to purchase tuning forks and a reflex hammer.** The type of tuning fork you should get (*for vibration sense testing*) is 128 Hz with weighted ends.

128 Hz tuning fork

Washington University in St. Louis, Campus Box 1201, One Brookings Drive, St. Louis, Missouri 63130-4899 (314) 935-9626, Fax: (314) 935-5781, shs.wustl.edu
- A 512 Hz tuning fork (without weighted ends) will be used for auditory testing and is also recommended.

512 Hz tuning fork

As for reflex hammers, the weight of the hammer is what is used to produce consistent reflexes, not the force of your arm, so the heavier, the better. The lightest (and cheapest) of hammers, the triangular tomahawk style hammer (Taylor) is the worst. There are two styles that I recommend: either the type with a heavy round head and long nylon or steel handle (Babinski or Queen’s Square) or the Troemner (Mayo) type. I personally use a Troemner hammer because I find it much easier to fit the head into the crook of patients’ arms. If you choose a round head hammer, the longer, the better. The Babinski with telescoping steel handle or Babinski or Queen Square hammers with flexible nylon handle are the longest, and in my opinion, the best of this style hammer (and the telescoping variety the most fun), while the smaller 9-inch Babinski with a 2-position head and Buck hammer styles are mediocre.

- Purchase of a blood pressure cuff is optional and not required.

- How much should I spend on my equipment? Keep in mind that approximately $900 is calculated in the tuition summary for your first year of medical school. This expense is as important as housing, food and books. Shop around. We provide the equipment day as a convenience, plus these companies also offer warranties on the equipment they sell while you are in medical school and beyond, free of charge.

We hope this information helps in your equipment purchasing decisions. If you have any questions feel free to contact us. We look forward to meeting you in August and to working with you in the coming years.

Sincerely,
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TTY/bd