PEARLS for Excelling on the CCCA

• **History:**
  - **Scan**
    - After asking patient why they are here do NOT go into closed questions. Do NOT ask about their chief complaint. Rather, ask, “Is there something else?” / “Are there any other symptoms?” etcetera.
    - The benefits of scanning:
      - You get the table of contents out early. You get the lay of the land. This helps you prioritize your agenda and it help to problem solve early.
      - It gives a message to the patient that they are supposed to talk. It prevents the examiner from having to think of every question.
  - **Automate your ROS**
    - Do the “target” system, a system above and below, and the constitutional ROS
  - **Organization:**
    - Stay in one room of the house till it is done. In other words, if you are asking questions about the cardiac ROS do the *entire* cardiac ROS before moving on. You don’t want to have to come back; it is too easy to forget.

• **Problem Solving:**
  - **Generate conditional hypotheses** before walking in the door. Write them in the RLQ of your paper. You can then refer to this if you get stuck. Refer to it again before going to the PE. It should drive your PE.
  - **PE:**
    - **Hypothesis driven PE.** Use your conditional hypotheses to figure out what you need to examine.
    - **Remember,** auscultation of the heart is *not* a cardiovascular exam. Not all patients need a full CV exam but if heart disease is on your list of possibilities *just* listening to the ht is not great.
    - **Automate your Neuro exam.** This is a difficult exam that could be time consuming, however if you practice it a lot it will be much faster and more fluent.
    - **Because of the time issue** during the exam, make sure you *at least* get to the important parts of the PE. For example:
      - If the patient has a sprained ankle you *know* you need to do a full ankle exam. Remember to examine at least a joint above and a joint below (and everything in between those joints).
      - What are the complications of an injury to the ankle? Examine for nerve and vascular integrity in addition to the bones and soft tissues.
      - If you have time you can check heart and lungs.

• **Closing:**
  - “Here is what I think is going on……”
  - “Here is what I suggest we do to treat or to diagnose…..”
  - **Tell patient what s/he needs to do now!**
    - “Please wait in the room while I get my attending.”
    - “Please go to the lab and call me tomorrow for the results.”
    - “Please wait here. I need to arrange for you to get admitted to 5East.”…

• **Generic:**
  - “What are you most worried about?”
  - “What do you think this might be?”
  - Encourage patient to ask questions