

Commentary on Finals Results for all Candidates

January 2017

Bristol Clinical Data Examination (BCDE)

The BCDE exam covers content such as x-rays (abdomen, chest, limbs), ECGs, and various manifestations of disease, with video recordings of patient histories condensed to 60 secs or so. It allows an objective assessment of students' ability to analyse clinical symptoms and signs, and has a relatively fast pace. This year's exam was taken just before the Christmas break and results were announced yesterday. All who took it passed the exam, well done to them.

We thought it would be useful to include the comments being fed back to Year 5 students about their overall performance which might of particular interest to those in Years 3 and 4, who will be taking this exam in the relatively near future.

Analysis of the answers given by all candidates has identified learning points for a large number of students. These learning points are:

1) ECGs

Large Q waves in the chest leads without any ST segment changes or T wave changes indicate an old myocardial infarct. If these Q waves are confined to VI and V2, it would be an old anterior infarct. If the Q waves extend to leads V3 and V4, it is anteroseptal.

Look out on ECGs for flutter waves which typically run along at 300bpm, and a ventricular rate which is a fraction of 300 (150, 100, 75 etc)

2) Breathlessness

In patients who suddenly and unexpectedly find themselves more breathless than usual, suspect pulmonary embolic disease.

3) Neurology

Middle cerebral artery strokes do not cause lower motor neuron VIIth nerve palsies

4) Surgery

Complications after thyroidectomy: surgeons should be nowhere near the larynx when operating on the thyroid. If a hoarse voice results, it's caused by damage to the recurrent laryngeal nerve.

It is rare for a prominent scrotal swelling to be caused by an indirect inguinal hernia without some degree of distension of the inguinal canal.

Testicular cancer can present as a change in the testis. In many cases the testis enlarges, but it can also reduce in size or just feel different in some way. Intermittent pain in the testis is also associated with testicular cancer. The bottom line is that *any* change should be taken seriously.

5) Inflammatory Bowel Disease

In inflammatory bowel disease, diarrhoea (often relatively painless) is more typical of ulcerative colitis than Crohn's disease.

The written papers (paper 1 and paper 2)

The written exam in Year 5 presently consists of two paper, which cover factual recall and knowledge application through the “best of 5” format of MCQs. The subject areas are largely medicine and surgery, perioperative care, primary and palliative care, but there are frequently a few questions on specialities like child health, O&G (Prof Cahill thinks that’s the most important), psychiatry, ENT, dermatology and so on.

Like in the BCDE, there were some questions that revealed learning needs shared by large numbers of students, worth taking note of. These include:

- 1) Calculation of numbers needed to treat
- 2) The treatment of infections
Knowing about the treatment of TB
- 3) The management of COPD
Refresh your memory of this by looking at the most up to date guidelines produced by the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease <http://goldcopd.org/>
- 4) The presentation of different types of pneumonia
- 5) The effects of drug misuse
- 6) The diagnosis of hypercalcaemia
- 7) The causes of hypokalaemia

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