

# A Few Words of Encouragement to MRCOG Candidates

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MRCOG examination is always regarded as a major challenge to the training pathway of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. I can still recall the tension, pressure and stress that I had to cope with years ago, particularly in preparation for the OSCE.

Nowadays, there is a trend for medical graduates to sit for MRCOG Part I during their internship. This is a sensible act if you know clearly that Obstetrics and Gynaecology is the career you want to pursue further. Part I examination focuses more on pre-clinical topics. Hopefully, your memory of the basic science remains relatively fresh from your undergraduate teaching to give you a reasonable chance of success. If you are lucky enough to pass the examination, you will obviously stand a much higher chance in getting a training post. Moreover, you can concentrate on your clinical development during your postgraduate training and prepare for your Part II examination that you have to face in 4 years time.

I think most candidates probably know about the two major changes in the coming Part II examination. Firstly, Hong Kong will alternate with Singapore as the centre for OSCE. Candidates who have sat and passed the written paper in March will have to travel to Singapore in May for OSCE since oral assessment will be held in Hong Kong in November and in Singapore in May every year.

The second modification is the inclusion of extended matching questions (EMQs) as a component of the written paper of the Part II examination with effect from September 2006. This examination format is expected to bridge between the multiple choice questions (MCQ) and the short answer questions (SAQ) and also to overcome the shortcomings related to these types of questions. Although EMQ is a new introduction in the MRCOG examination, our local graduates already have fairly good experience in this test format from their undergraduate examinations. Basically, there are four components in an EMQ. They include the theme/domain from which the questions are selected, a list of options,

a “lead in” statement and the items. Each item is usually a question based on a clinical scenario. A more detailed description on its background and structure is available in *The Obstetrician and Gynaecologist* (Volume 8 Number 3, July 2006). A new book titled *EMQs for the MRCOG Part 2* by J Duthie and P Hodges is recently released. You may also find an example of the EMQ question in the RCOG website: <<http://www.rcog.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=1336>>.

One important key to success in examination is to read the whole question carefully. Practicing the past papers is vital to get yourself familiar with the examination format. Lock yourself away from everything and everybody, set the alarm clock and practice the whole paper as a mock examination. If you do not understand a certain question, leave it for the time being. I usually start with the straightforward questions first and return to the difficult ones later. Always limit your time for each question and remember to answer all questions. Imagine as if the patient is sitting in front of you and think analytically about a particular clinical scenario.

Excellent books are available. You can find the reading list in the bookshop of RCOG website. Review journal articles can give you an update overview of the topic. Revision courses and mock examinations are organised both locally and overseas. Do join at least one of them, especially for the OSCE. Get yourself familiar with the British system. Though the topics for OSCE are so heterogeneous, there are certain key elements and common themes that you can identify to drill in. Be calm and confident at the time of OSCE. In tackling the counselling sessions, act in the role play and speak to the surrogate patients or relatives, but not the examiners. No amount of reading will help you pass the OCSE. You must find your colleagues and practice. You may be surprised to see that minor management actions do score marks in the examination.

I wish all the candidates every success in the coming examination. Good luck.