Preparing for the MRCPsych Exams

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Developing people
for health and
healthcare

www.hee.nhs.uk
NW MRCPsych Course

Introductions

• Exams are an important part of training
• As a trainee it is important to understand the course, resources available, and how to start preparing for exam
• Exam progression can be a rate limiting step in trainee progression

**BUT....**

• It is important to keep in mind the development of competency as a Psychiatrist, to inform your future practice as an ST and Consultant
• Guided by PDP, supervision and ARCP
Today’s Session

Aims and Objectives

This session is to give an overview of the NW MRCPsych course and how to support trainees with their exams

By the end of the workshop participants should be able to:

• Have an overview of the structure of the MRCPsych exams
• Begin to access resources for the exams
• Feel confident to start planning and preparing for exams
The MRCPsych Exams

https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/training/exams
Review the RCPsych website

- Syllabus
- ‘Passing the MRCPsych guide – the insiders’ guide’
- Information on processes - updates likely
- Tron
MRCPsych Examinations

Everything in the exams is in the syllabus

PAPER A

Behavioural Science and Sociocultural Psychiatry
Human Development
Basic Neurosciences
Clinical Psychopharmacology
Classification and Assessment in Psychiatry

PAPER B

Organisation and Delivery of Psychiatric Services
General Adult Psychiatry
Old Age Psychiatry
Psychotherapy
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
Substance Misuse/Addictions
Forensic Psychiatry
Psychiatry of Learning Disability
Critical Review
MRCPsych Examinations

The overall components required to pass

• The MRCPsych Examinations consist of

  – Two written papers: Papers A and B
  – Clinical Assessment of Skills and Competencies (CASC)
MRCPsych Examinations

The written papers

- Paper A: ‘The scientific and theoretical basis of psychiatry’
- Paper B: ‘Critical review and the clinical topics in psychiatry’

- 3 hour papers with 150 questions
MRCPsych Examinations

CASC

OSCE
• Morning: 8 single stations
  – 4 minutes to read the instructions and 7 minutes to complete the task.
• Afternoon: 8 single stations
  – 90 seconds to read and 7 minutes to undertake the task.

• The 16 CASC station exam comprises of
  – 5 stations focused on History Taking
  – 5 stations focused on Examination
  – 6 stations focused on Patient Management.

Achieve overall pass mark and at least 12 stations need to be passed (details of marking on RCPsych website)
MRCPsych Examinations

The CASC
MRCPsych Examinations

Eligibility (written papers)

• Check on website for guidance on application

• Paper A (£467)
  – any fully registered medical practitioner

• Paper B (£420)
  – on an approved training programme. College recommend you have 12 months’ experience in psychiatry before attempting Paper B
  – OR you are in a post recognised by your hospital or trust as having contracted time and funding for educational training (with other specifications…).
MRCPsych Examinations

Eligibility (CASC)

- CASC (£965)
  You have 24 months’ whole time equivalent post foundation / internship experience in psychiatry

AND

A pass in Papers A and B, OR you comply with transitional arrangements

AND

You have sponsorship in place, and can demonstrate one of the following:
- If your post is within a programme of approved training, you have successfully completed the ARCP by the time you apply for CASC.
- for all other posts, you must have successfully completed an Assessment Portfolio (with other specifications)
MRCPsych examinations

Exam dates

• Published on website
• Application and results timeframes
• Multiple venues
• Need to plan sequence
During a cognitive assessment, you ask a 72-year-old woman who the Prime Minister is. Which type of memory is being assessed?

a) Autobiographical  
b) Episodic  
c) Procedural  
d) Semantic  
e) Working
• Which area of the brain is most closely associated with recognition of faces?

a) Amygdala  
b) Fusiform gyrus  
c) Left inferior frontal cortex  
d) Nucleus accumbens  
e) Prefrontal areas
For each of the clinical vignettes select the ONE most appropriate differential diagnosis from the option list. Each option might be used once, more than once, or not at all.

You are asked to see a 21-year-old graduate who is having difficulty coping with his new job as an administrative officer. He arrives for his appointment half an hour early because he wanted to make sure he was not late. He reports that he is finding his job very stressful because he is having problems at work. He has worked out a routine of how the mail needs to be managed and drawn up a flow chart to make sure everything runs as smoothly as possible but other members of staff are not following the flow chart. Choose ONE option
Your consultant has asked you to gain consent from a depressed patient who is currently detained under mental health legislation. She has not responded to medication and is becoming very thin and dehydrated. You are asked to see if she is competent to consent to ECT. Which of the following is essential for the patient to have capacity?

a) The patient must be able to communicate verbally what her decision is.
b) She cannot change her mind over the course of the day.
c) She must have an intact memory.
d) She agrees to sign the consent form.
e) She must understand the treatment.
Select the least likely option regarding the efficacy of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

a) CBT and relaxation training are equally effective in generalised anxiety disorder.
b) CBT is effective in the treatment of delusions.
c) CBT is more effective than waiting list control in patients with HIV and depression.
d) In CBT for depression, cognitive changes generally precede behavioural changes.
e) In CBT for relationship difficulties, patients who engage in homework make quicker, longer lasting and more generalised progress.
You are about to see Sarah Green, an eighteen year old student who has been brought to Accident and Emergency by her mother. It is suspected that she has ingested a recreational drug at a party just over 30 hours ago. Her mother describes her as being ‘paranoid’.

- Examine the patient to establish what abnormal beliefs she holds.
- Establish whether any other psychopathology is present.
- You are not expected to take a drug and/or alcohol history.
• https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/training/exams/preparing-for-exams/casc-guide-for-trainees/casc-videos
MRCPsych Examinations

Updates

• Neurosciences mostly
  – Syllabus revised
  – All neuroscience questions checked, outdated ones removed
  – New questions written since Dec 2017 sitting
MRCPsych Examinations

Future directions

- Refining question bank
- Neuroscience implementation
- Development of Tron
- New core curriculum (updates next year)
- Changes to balance/marking in CASC stations?
- Short answer questions (writing the answer)
MRCPsych Examinations

Next steps

• Familiarise yourself with the RCPsych website
• Download the exam syllabus for reference
• Know what will be covered in each exam

• Start planning your path to Membership of the Royal College of Psychiatrists!
Any questions about the structure of the exams?
Exercise for 5-10 minutes…

• In you next supervision, you overly enthusiastic supervisor asks you about exams and how you plan to prepare for the exams…
  • What are you going to say?
Exam Preparation
Holistic planning

- Start your preparations today
- Work/life planning – balancing commitments
- Leave
- Costs (exams and preparation)
- Applications
- Social groups
- Creating and protecting time is a worthwhile investment..
Clinical Placement and ARCP

Personal study and development

MRCPsych Preparation

Specific Practice for Paper A/B

Specific Practice for CASC
Clinical Placement and ARCP

MRCPsych Preparation
Exam Preparation

Clinical Placements

• Using the ‘1-hour protected supervision’ to the trainees advantage
  – Talk about the exams
  – Get support for CP, JC and 555s
  – Align different objectives in your study
  – Work Place Based Assessments focussed on potential CASC scenarios
MRCPsych Preparation
Exam Preparation

Self Study

• Inevitable that lots of self study is required
• Familiarisation with the syllabus
• Papers and books…. in combination with exam practice and MCQs
• NW MRCPsych Course material online
• Trainees Online (TrOn) online modules for the basic sciences – with more developing in neurosciences
• Revision courses
Exam Preparation

Self Study

• Recommendations include:
  – Symptoms in the Mind (Sims)
  – Fish’s Clinical Psychopathology (Casey/Kelly)
  – Neuroanatomy (Haines)
  – Essential Psychopharmacology (Stahl)
  – Psychology for the MRCPsych (Munafo)
  – A Doctor’s Guide to Critical Appraisal (Gossall/Gossall)
Exam Preparation

Practice for Written Papers

• Questions Questions Questions
• Reading Reading Reading
• Tron and online courses
• NW MRCPsych course, there are approximately 1500 questions presented to the trainees in different formats
  – LAP/Academic Days
  – Additional question banks on the VLE
Exam Preparation

Self Study

• The NW MRCPsych Course Website

www.schoolofpsychiatry.net
Exam Preparation

Practice for Written Papers

NW Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

www.manchesterpsychiatry.net
The HEE(NW) MRCPsych Course

Dashboard / My courses / MRCPsych

MRCPsych Preparation Hints and Tips

1. Introduction to exams and preparation

MRCPsych Mock Paper A and B

Below are 2 Mock Exam Papers - one for Paper A and one for Paper B.

They have approximately 200 questions, with 2/3 single best answers and 1/3 extended matching items which is the same as the exam. Instant scoring is provided.

NEW Paper A Practice Exam (2017)
NEW Paper B Practice Exam (2017)

Basic Sciences (Paper A)
Basic Sciences (Paper A)

Paper A tests 1-5 of the syllabus (The Basic Sciences)

In this section, we will cover 1-5: Behavioural Science / Socio-cultural Psychiatry (1) and Human Development (2) - these are combined as there is so much overlap in the exam, Neurosciences (3), Psychopharmacology (4) and Assessment/Classification (5).

Below are short exam style quizzes. Each quiz has approx 15 single best answer questions and 3 extended matching items. They give instant feedback, explanation of the answer and a reference to the course so you can do some background reading from the HEE (NW) MRCPsych webpages. They are all novel questions reviewed by a trained question writer.

There is also a link to the RCPsych TrOn modules for Paper A.
Practice for CASC

MRCPsych Preparation
Exam Preparation

Practice for CASC

- ‘How to Pass the MRCPsych CASC’
- Talk about CASC and stations in specialties
- Use WPBAs during the placement – Mini-ACE
- Study groups (include near peers and supervisors)
- Local trusts have CASC practice
- External courses (££££)
- MRCPsych Course Progress Test
Exam Preparation

Practice for CASC

- Practical OSCE Progress Test:
  - Annual 8 single station OSCE
  - Scenarios similar to the CASC
  - Completed under exam conditions
  - Feedback given as mark sheets
Exam Preparation

Practice for CASC

• Focus on the task
• Empathic communication
• Keep to time
• Summarise at the end
• Feedback and reflection to fine tune clinical skills
• Confidence and resilience (through preparation)
Exam Preparation

Exam Technique – as part of the RAP

• CT1
  – Today to look at the course and exams
  – Practice questions and tests
  – Exam technique

• CT2
  – Practice questions
  – CASC preparation
NW MRCPsych Course

Summary

• Exams are an important part of training (but only part of what shapes your development)
• Review the RCPsych website (today!)
• It is important to get familiar with the syllabus and available resources (including this course) in your MRCPsych preparation
• Talk – to us, supervisors, senior colleagues, near peers and each other - about exams to stay orientated to your goals
Questions?

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