

President's Note

In recent issues we have discussed board certification and recertification for American cardiologists. Our British colleagues have also been grappling with the issue of knowledge assessment. As we refine our processes, we thought it would be informative to hear about it from someone who is starting the process.

Knowledge Assessment for UK Cardiology Trainees

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[Rev Cardiovasc Med. 2010;11(2):102 doi: 10.3909/ricm1120002]

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As part of the process of updating the UK Specialist Training Curriculum for Cardiology there was a need for the curriculum and its assessment system to meet new government standards laid out by the training regulator, the General Medical Council (GMC). This required us to develop a method for assessing the acquisition of core cardiology knowledge by our trainees (specialist registrars).

The assessment is known as the Cardiology Knowledge-Based Assessment (KBA) and is administered by the British Cardiovascular Society (BCS) in conjunction with the Joint Royal Colleges of Physicians Training Board. The KBA only demonstrates adequate knowledge of the cardiology curriculum and is just 1 of several forms of assessment that trainees will have to undergo. The objective is to complement the workplace-based assessments that are the mainstay of assessing trainees' progress in developing the necessary competences that are needed to practice satisfactorily as a cardiologist.

Trainees in their third year of a 5-year training program will take the

KBA. Following a successful UK pilot examination last year, the first batch of trainees sat the examination in earnest in June, 2010. The KBA consists of 120 best-of-5 multiple choice questions. The examination is computer based, allowing for the use of still and video images, as well as text, in the stem of the questions. It is held at a single site, under invigilated conditions, during the Annual Conference & Exhibition of the BCS in Manchester, UK.

The BCS has collaborated in the question-writing process with the European Board for the Specialty of Cardiology, a body under the joint aegis of the Cardiology Section of the Union of European Medical Specialties and the European Society of Cardiology (ESC). The ultimate objective is to develop a European-wide KBA, for which the UK is the pilot.

Question writers were recruited by the BCS and the ESC from among its members and trained at a 1-day workshop on the drafting of multiple choice questions, run by experienced Membership of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK (MRCP[UK]) question writers. Question writers

prepare draft questions in advance of meeting to subject all the material to peer-group review and editing. The question topics are selected to cover all aspects of the cardiology syllabus. The group meets twice yearly to review the performance of questions, and to process new draft questions for addition to the question bank. To ensure content validity, all questions are drafted by active clinical cardiologists, who are briefed to ensure that question material is relevant to trainees approaching the end of their core specialty training and representative of the level of knowledge required by a newly appointed consultant. To provide face validity, question writers are required to set each question as far as possible within a relevant clinical context, representative of a candidate's everyday activity.

The development of the KBA has been an important project for the BCS that has required close cooperation with the ESC. Crucial to its success has been the involvement of many of its members who have freely given their time to produce the required multiple choice questions. ■