

# Passing the Primary FRCA - a guide

Arihant Jain

---

## Part 1: MCQ/SBA

### My revision

Everyone has a revision style unique to them and most people who have been through exams at medical school, regardless of format would have developed their own style of revision.

Prior to revision, I found reading around the common drugs helpful (Peck, Hill and Williams), and equipment book (Al-Sheikh) to familiarise my-self with the common equipment, particularly in the initial 3 months. The e-learning introductory modules are helpful but only if you have a lot of spare time!!

I started "revision" in April of my CT1 year for the MCQ sitting at beginning of September. I initially read a pharmacology book (Peck, Hill and Williams), a physics book (Physics in Anaesthesia), Master pass Primary FRCA 1 for physiology. I then took a "do lots of questions approach" to revision using MCQs from:

- Anaesthesia UK
- RCOA Primary book
- Most importantly the questions on ELearning for health website (probably the best source of questions).
- I also had subscription for OnExamination but didn't find it useful at all.

The bottom line is that make sure you read all the key topics and answer lots of MCQs and keep on doing those MCQs closer to the exams as the questions repeat themselves a lot.

I found Coventry Primary FRCA revision course very useful two weeks prior to sitting the exam. Although some the material on the course was vague, it gave me a broad question base and I also made me used to answering lots of questions in a limited amount of time under exam conditions.

Finally, the dreaded SBAs, the lack of question bank for SBAs make them unpredictable and I certainly struggled with it. I found going through Single best answers MCQs Part 1 and 2 by Mendonca very useful. The MCQ is a test of knowledge base and although you can probably Pass this exam by crammer revision style 1 month before the exam, I would recommend that you give yourself enough time to go through all the material mainly for the reason that if you understand the background it sets you up nicely for VIVA/SOE revision.

## **Part 2: OSCE/VIVA**

### **My revision**

The key to exam success for VIVA/SOE is not to wait after passing the MCQ. You hopefully have the base knowledge and just need to brush up the edges with a bit more knowledge and then PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE. I decided to revisit the entire syllabus by using Podcast revision book, Master pass Primary FRA 1 and 2 and Plunkett was especially good for graphs and definitions and exam preparation.

I arranged lots of practice session with consultants at work. Got them to ask me lots of questions during the lists. When I was on CEPD with another CT1 they had no choice but to listen to me. I explained ventilators, circuits and talked about drugs. It was a great experience for me and for them!!

In the last three weeks, I found helpful consultants and who would viva me in an exam style and find time on their off days to help. I aimed for six 10-minute viva sessions a day. I also had a lot of help from other CT2s who had passed their exams recently and worked with them for exam technique and plenty of practice.

I supplemented my gaps in knowledge by reading the topics in the evening. On average I did two 1-hour sessions in the evening and of a weekend three 2-hour sessions. I booked leave the week before the exam and structured the week, organized multiple viva sessions and went through common viva questions especially from the RCOA book (invaluable) and practiced them again and again with peers and seniors.

I found the Coventry course for OSCE/SOE very useful (especially OSCE). The SIM and anatomy stations were useful. They ran 2 full OSCE rounds in exam conditions which gave me a very good flavor of the real exam.

I also attended an OSCE day organized by my previous trust (City) where we practiced all the resuscitation guidelines and algorithms and practiced all the key simulation scenarios for OSCE including communication stations. Also I attended their morning viva practice session for 30 mins each day.

In summary for OSCE/SOE there is a theme here, make sure you know something about everything. The exam is not about the depth of your knowledge, it's about how the information is presented and the confidence that you present the information with. Every single OSCE/ SOE question I had, someone had asked in some form in the 4 weeks prior to the exam.

In the exam you will come out of all the OSCE stations and VIVA's thinking that it went horrible but even if you feel like that, just give your best. You don't know what they are looking for and you may have said enough to score well. I found the exam process scary and stressful, most normal people do so don't let that affect your next performance.

Once it's all done don't forget to have a drink at the Square Peg opposite the Royal College!!