

## **MCQ/SBA**

I started revising for the September MCQ in April of that year. I initially planned to spend one month each doing physics, pharmacology and physiology, but soon found because I had not done A-level physics at school, that I needed to spend a bit longer learning physics. Before April I had read a bit around pharmacology, so I understood the basics before I embarked on my full-on revision time.

For physics revision I primarily used 'Basic Physics and Measurement in Anaesthesia' by Davis, Parbrook and Kenny. This covers pretty much all the physics you will need. You may need to look at another book for the equipment side of things, eg. 'Essentials of Anaesthetic Equipment' by Al –Shaikh, but I didn't do this and just used Dr Podcast and A-Z.

For pharmacology everyone uses 'Pharmacology for Anaesthesia and Intensive Care' by Peck and Hill, but this book is quite dry! It's probably worth reading the first eight chapters, on pharmacokinetics and dynamics, which is what I did to get a good foundation of the principles.

The book I found most beneficial, for learning the ins and outs of individual drugs (mostly for the viva), is 'Drugs in Anaesthesia and Intensive Care'. It's an Oxford Handbook and is really useful, as each drug is laid out in the same format, with some comparison tables at the end. I use this book quite frequently at work too, for doses and other calculations, so it's well worth having!

The only textbook I used for physiology was 'Respiratory Physiology' by West. I didn't read it (and not all of it) until later on in my revision but wish I had read it earlier as it made things make sense! I didn't really use a specific textbook for anything else, but just used A-Z, Dr Podcast and eLA. I think the eLA on cardiology, renal and neurophysiology are more than enough to revise from. Lots of people recommend 'Fundamentals of Anaesthesia' by Smith and Pinnock but this book was too much for me and I didn't use it.

In about July time I switched from book learning to doing MCQ questions. Some people prefer to learn through MCQs throughout their entire revision period, but I only really find them helpful once I have a good baseline of knowledge. For MCQ practice I tried using FRCAQ online, but soon found that the questions were not entirely relevant to what we need to know, so I wouldn't recommend this question bank. I did all of the MCQs on eLA and in the RCoA Primary FRCA book. The RCoA book 'Guide to the FRCA examination: The Primary' is a must-buy. You can print off an order form from the RCoA website. It's got loads of practice MCQ and viva questions, and quite a number of these come up in the actual exam, so they're worth memorising!!

I was worried about the SBAs as there are not so many questions out there to practice. I bought two books by C. Mendonca – 'Single Best Answer MCQs in Anaesthesia – Volume I and II' and found these really good.

I went on the Coventry Primary FRCA MCQ course which was a worthwhile use of three days in July.

## **OSCE/Viva**

Once I passed the MCQ/SBA I gave myself a week off before embarking on viva practice. The best way to prepare for the viva is to practice practice practice as much as possible with anyone and everyone – consultants, juniors, ODPs, partners, family members. I was apprehensive at first at doing viva practice with my colleagues because I didn't want to expose myself or look stupid, but I soon found that this was by far the best way to build up confidence and practice how to explain something. In the month before the viva, myself and another trainee taking the exam set up a timetable in my hospital for consultants to viva us for an hour or so in the evenings. We watched each other being viva'd, which was awful but a really useful way of learning!

When I was not practicing with someone, I read from the following books:

'Anaesthesia and Intensive Care A-Z' by Yentis and Hirsch. Apparently the figures and numbers they quote in the exam are taken from A-Z, so it's worth learning the values and graphs as they are in this book. Before my viva I practised drawing all the graphs in this book (not many).

'Dr Podcast Scripts for the Primary FRCA' by Leslie and Johnson. Loads of people use this book, and it's really easy to read. Lots of people also have the actual podcasts, which I used when I was commuting. They are quite heavy and after about 20 minutes of listening you will probably need to switch off!

The RCOA Primary book has lots of viva questions, which are all answered in 'The Primary FRCA Structured Oral Exam Guide 1 and 2' by Lara Wijayasiri and Kate McCombe. These books are really good.

I didn't go on a viva course as felt I was getting enough practice at work. I did, however, go on the Burton OSCE course because I felt I had not dedicated enough time to OSCE practice. Here they run two full sets of 18 OSCE stations, in exam conditions, and you get given individual feedback for each station after both sets. A gruelling, sometimes awkward, but worthwhile day.

As other people have said, the OSCE/Viva is about breadth of knowledge, so it's important to know a bit about everything. Having said that, if you genuinely don't know the answer to their question, better to say so and move on quickly than to faff around and waste the rest of your time.

Make sure you book a holiday and have some time off to look forward to once it's all done!