

The MRCGP examination

The following questions were set as part of the examination for membership, 9 May 1989.

Practice topic question paper

Time allowed two hours. All questions to be answered

1. Discuss the differential diagnosis of confusion in an elderly woman living alone. Outline the problems you may face in your management.
2. Referral rates reflect the quality of care provided by a general practitioner. Discuss.
3. Penicillin is the drug of choice in tonsillitis. Discuss.

Modified essay question (MEQ)

Time allowed two hours

● The third consultation of your morning surgery is interrupted by your receptionist to tell you that Mr Colin Bennett, a man in his early 30s, has collapsed in the waiting room. You are the only doctor available. When you reach him you find him apnoeic and pulseless.

Describe your actions during the next 15 minutes.

● Mr Bennett is successfully resuscitated and taken to hospital.

What do you do to restore equanimity?

● Later that morning you are consulted by Mr Carter, a 55 year old pharmacist who has recently visited an optician. He hands you a letter on which the optician states that Mr Carter appears to have early cupping and intraocular pressures are 28mm in the right eye and 26mm in the left. In addition, he suspects slight visual field loss in the right eye. Mr Carter asks, 'What is this going to mean?'

Outline your approach in replying to his question.

● You decide to refer Mr Carter to a consultant ophthalmologist. You are aware that the current waiting list for routine appointments is nine months.

Write your letter of referral. (N.B. To ensure candidate anonymity do not sign your name).

● The same morning Mrs Dencer brings her eight and a half year old son Kevin. She tells you that Kevin is due to go to school camp in six weeks time, but is worried because he is still wetting the bed four or five times per week.

How can you help?

● After morning surgery one of your visits is to Mr and Mrs Hardy, a couple in their mid 50s. You have recently received a letter from a consultant neurologist stating that, in his opinion, Mrs Hardy is suffering from early Alzheimer's disease. Mr Hardy asks you if he might discuss his wife's diagnosis in private.

What fears and anxieties might Mr Hardy have?

● During evening surgery the same day Mr and Mrs Adams come to see you. One week previously you admitted Mrs Adams with an inevitable miscarriage of her first pregnancy at 12 weeks and at the time suggested that she should see you after discharge from hospital.

List the issues that could be discussed during this consultation.

● Later, you are completing a life assurance form about a Mr Phillips who has previously told you in confidence that, although married, he is bisexual. There is no history of sexually transmitted disease. A question on the report asks, 'Are you aware of any factor which places your patient at risk of infection by the AIDS virus or any other sexually transmitted disease?'

What issues are raised by the question?

● Some weeks later Mr Brian Bennett, aged 27, younger brother of Colin Bennett (whom you had admitted to hospital with a myocardial infarction), comes to see you stating that he has had several episodes of chest discomfort. From the history he gives you, you feel this is unlikely to have an organic basis.

What information do you need to decide whether or not his symptoms are likely to be psychogenic in origin?

● At your next team meeting your practice nurse approaches you and says she would like to run a 'well man' clinic. Amongst other ideas, she produces a protocol (see below) for the detection and management of cardiovascular risk factors.

Comment on the protocol.

A 'WELL MAN' CLINIC — SUGGESTED PROTOCOL

1. Send a letter to all men in the practice aged between 25 and 55.
2. The letter would explain that by attending for a 'health check' they could halve their risk of dying of a heart attack or stroke.
3. Invite them to a special clinic run by the practice nurse, every Thursday from 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm, with no appointment necessary.
4. At the clinic, the practice nurse would: ask about (a) smoking, (b) alcohol intake, (c) exercise habits, (d) diet, (e) job stress.
5. (a) measure weight, (b) take blood pressure, (c) take blood for full blood count and cholesterol level, (d) test a urine sample.
6. (a) advise a low cholesterol diet, (b) recommend regular exercise, (c) give a tetanus vaccination.
7. Refer the patient to the doctor if: (a) BP greater than 150/90, (b) weight greater than 10% above average, (c) the patients asks for help in giving up smoking.