

NEW CPSP EXAM FORMAT: A SURVEY

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College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP) was established in 1962. The college is one of a kind in the country providing postgraduate examination to 100s of post graduate (PG) trainees inducted in residency programs each year. Over the years CPSP has managed to give support, assistance, educational growth and challenges for the coming future generations of PGs. Our future depends upon them. Every decision including examination format can have a profound effect on our future.

Having said that, a bulletin was released in December 08, 2007, after the 134th meeting of CPSP held on 16-17 November stating the decision to amend the format of Intermediate Module (IM) examination effective from June 2008 examination. The revised format includes two parts, a Written paper and a Clinical exam. The Written paper consists of two question papers. Paper-I will contain 10 short essay questions and paper-II, 100 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) of single best type. The Clinical part includes Task Oriented Assessment of Clinical Skills (TOACS) only; while there will be no clinical examination. In the last IM examination this summer, the written paper on 25 June 2008 was based on previous style, however the Clinical exam was conducted in the new TOACS method. It consisted of 10 OSCE and 10 interactive sessions. However, the next examination maybe the written paper will also be in the new MCQ style.

We conducted a small survey and asked several residents in major radiology residency programs in Karachi few questions about this new exam pattern. Following questions were asked, Q1) Do you know about the new examination format of IM?, Q2) Do you feel this is a positive change?, Q3) Will this change help /assist you in training? Our objectives were to evaluate how residents felt regarding this new change. We tried to focus on those who will be giving the exam

in next few months. Approximately 60% of residents were not sure about the format change. Once the new format was explained 80 % of residents felt that this was a positive change which would make them better residents.

Regarding MCQs residents felt it would make studying more thorough and extensive which would make the exam more difficult as more detail would have to be covered and in all disciplines. This would make it harder to pass. One major advantage would be to be able to study for other foreign exams at the same time as most of them including Fellowship exams in UK have multiple choice style.

Residents felt that the introduction of TOACS was an excellent change. Some of the positive aspects mentioned were, that it made exam more homogenous for all residents having same questions for all, removal of examiner bias, and ability to face all examiners even those from same institute. Surprisingly, having to get done with TOACS all in one day was also liked. However, one major complaint almost all had was the inability to receive the MCPS degree since the introduction of TOACS. Residents felt that not all PGs manage to clear the FCPS exam. These residents at the completion of the required FCPS training have a hope that they will receive MCPS degree which would have allowed them to pursue there careers. Unfortunately that is no more.

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