

## **Feedback on the January 2012 MRCGP Applied Knowledge Test (AKT)**

The AKT core group provides feedback on each sitting of the AKT, both direct to educationalists and on the examination section of the College website. We hope that the feedback is of benefit to programme directors and trainers in guiding the learning of AiTs, and to AiTs themselves. To this end, we aim to structure our feedback using headings which relate to the RCGP curriculum documentation. We welcome comments about our feedback, and these can be sent to us via the e-mail address at the bottom of this document.

The computer-based, multi-centre AKT was offered for the fourteenth time on 25 January 2012.

### **Statistics**

1204 candidates sat AKT 14. The mean score was 146.28 out of 200 items, with scores ranging from the lowest of 84 to a high of 189.

On this occasion, the pass mark was set at 136 marks or 68%. This is the same pass mark as for AKT11 taken in January 2011. For AKT 14, the overall pass rate was 74.9% for all candidates taking the test. The pass rate for ST3 first-time takers was 81.7% and for ST2 first-time takers, it was 78.3%

The mean scores by subject area were:

- 'Clinical medicine' 74.6% (160 questions)
- 'Evidence interpretation' 69.2% (20 questions)
- 'Organisational' 65.4% (20 questions)

For the sake of transparency we also report the other key statistics from this test:

Reliability (Cronbach  $\alpha$  coefficient) = 0.89

Standard error of measurement = 5.56

### **Scoring items**

We were pleased to note from our analysis of the test that items performed well and on this occasion no items required suppression from the overall score.

## **Performance in key clinical areas**

Providing feedback which is educationally useful but which does not undermine the security of test items is never easy. With regard to AKT 14 there are a number of key clinical areas we wish to highlight to direct and facilitate learning. We have signposted these using the curriculum map.

Candidates did well in items concerned with current management of hypertension (curriculum statement 15.1: cardiovascular problems). Items concerning qualitative research and interpretation of data were answered better than in previous AKT examinations (curriculum statement 3.6: research and academic activity).

## **Areas causing difficulty for candidates**

Curriculum statement 3.2: patient safety

As we stated in the feedback to AKT 13, most AKT exams will contain at least one item which involves a therapeutics calculation. This could involve a scenario where details about the patient and the drug to be prescribed are given, and the candidate may be required to calculate the dose, or the volume to be administered. Disappointingly, in AKT 14, this item proved challenging for a significant minority of candidates. Calculation of drug doses is a routine part of day-to-day practice and errors could lead to serious harm. This topic will continue to be tested in subsequent AKTs.

Curriculum statement 15.7: Neurological problems

Candidates had difficulty with an item concerning indications, contraindications and side-effects of drugs used in a neurological condition. Although these drugs are usually initiated by a hospital consultant, the GP holds the responsibility for ongoing prescribing and should be able to discuss and recognise contraindications and adverse reactions. It is important that GPs have sufficient familiarity with these types of drugs.

Curriculum statement 9: Care of older adults

Candidates appeared to have difficulty with dementia assessment. This is especially concerning given the increasing prevalence of dementia in the UK.

Curriculum statement 10.2: Men`s health

Erectile dysfunction is common but candidates had some difficulty with items concerning this problem.

Curriculum statement 8: Care of children and young people

In almost every feedback we have commented that some items related to children have not been answered well. Again there seemed to be difficulties with child development, and also with neonatal problems. Each AKT

examination will include a number of items on this core part of general practice work. Trainers could perhaps provide more support for trainees in ensuring that they obtain experience in caring for children of all ages, including children who are well, so that candidates are confident about the range of normal findings.

#### Curriculum statement 10.1: Women's health

As with child health, this too is an area which commonly causes candidates difficulty. Knowledge around common contraceptive problems was lacking. Nurses provide much of the contraceptive advice in practices, but nonetheless trainees should be confident in their ability to give up-to-date contraceptive advice to patients. This is an area that may require special attention particularly for male candidates, as female patients may tend to seek advice from female doctors.

#### Curriculum statement 3: Personal and professional responsibilities

“Organisational” items make up 10% of the AKT. There were a number of topics which candidates appeared to find difficult, including correct completion of Fitness to Work certificates, insurance reports, fitness to drive standards, and regulations concerning administration of vaccinations. Trainers may be able to help trainees in this area by regularly sharing with them the range of regulatory, and non-clinical paperwork that crosses their desks but may not be familiar to trainees.

We would again recommend that candidates consider looking at the Essential Knowledge Update and Essential Knowledge Challenge sections of the RCGP website as part of their preparation for the AKT, as well as referring to the more familiar resources of NICE, SIGN and others.

#### **Non-disclosure**

Finally, we have been made aware that commercial companies who provide AKT revision material have been contacting candidates after they have sat the AKT for details about the examination. Releasing any information of this sort contravenes the non-disclosure agreement which all candidates have accepted and is therefore prohibited. We are grateful to the candidates who have brought this to our attention so that we can warn people who might unwittingly break this agreement by responding with information.

#### **AKT Core group February 2012**

**Comments or questions can be sent to the Examinations and Assessment Section: [exams@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:exams@rcgp.org.uk)**