

Virtual MRCP1 course for internal medicine trainees across West Midlands Deanery

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Background

With a pass rate of 53% in 2020, MRCP part 1 exam is a challenging exam. While there are several learning resources available, including online question banks, the COVID-19 pandemic had made exam preparation incredibly difficult with redeployments, high service pressures and formal IMT teaching cancelled. Moreover, trainees were experiencing burnout with the mental and physical exhaustion common during the peak of the pandemic. There was a need to develop novel ways to use the most up-to-date online platforms to allow distanced but social sessions to help trainees ace this exam, which is vital for career progression.

Method

We developed and organised a virtual course for MRCP1 exam preparation for internal medicine trainees across West Midlands Deanery. This involved a series of after work sessions (February–April 2021) using Microsoft Teams. Each session lasted 2 hours: in the first half we compared and contrasted the high yield topics enabling quick revision of commonly encountered themes using a PowerPoint presentation and providing useful mnemonics. In the final half we discussed multiple choice questions, while highlighting the clinchers and ‘cues’ in question statements and building on the concept of ‘pattern recognition’ in RCP exams. About 12 to 16 trainees attended these sessions regularly. Feedback was collected using SurveyMonkey.

Results

- > 12/12 trainees found these sessions highly useful.
- > Trainees rated it as ‘excellent’ and fed back that it was ‘concise’, ‘relevant’, ‘guided their exam preparation’, and was ‘more interactive than any other online teaching’.
- > 12 trainees joined these sessions – out of which eight trainees passed, two were unsuccessful, and two postponed their attempts.

Conclusion

Structured online teaching can be used as a key tool in postgraduate exam preparation. The MRCP1 course has gained huge popularity in our deanery. We have built upon our project and reorganised it this year whereby sessions are being recorded and uploaded on the postgraduate virtual learning environment (PGVLE) website so that trainees can access them ‘on demand’ and not miss out due to on-call commitments.

We have secured a wonderful learning resource for all future internal medicine trainees joining our deanery in years to come. ■

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