
The first sitting of the new Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine (FICM) Final examination was held in January 2013. The exam requires success in a Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) paper prior to attempts at the oral components. An updated MCQ format was introduced in July 2014 and consists of 60 multiple true-false (MTF) and 30 single-best-answer (SBA) questions. Experience of typical exam type questions can be critical to exam success. Until recently there has been a lack of such published material.

This book is therefore aimed at the intensive care medicine trainee preparing for the FICM MCQ examination. The authors suggest that the book may also be relevant to the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine (EDIC) Part 1 examination and other international intensive care examinations. It has been written by a group from Bristol which includes senior trainees who have recently passed the FICM examination, and a consultant in Critical Care and Anaesthesia. Some of the group are also active members of the FRCAQ website.

There are three exam papers in the book and each contains 90 MTF questions. Every question is followed by five stems, which are either true or false. Answers for each paper are given in a separate section and every answer is classified by topic. A short and then a long explanation is provided in each case. The short explanation is designed to be a tool for quick revision and the long explanation is detailed and includes relevant references.

A considerable range of up to date topics are covered in line with the CCT curriculum of the Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine, and with the CoBaTrICE curriculum (Competency Based Training in Intensive Care for Europe) of the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine. Questions and answers are both easy to read and digest. The authors have made a concerted effort to write original MCQ questions which are different from those published in previous books. Whilst the short explanations offer a cursory insight into the topic, many of the long explanations are thorough, well presented and act as useful synopses of current topics to aid learning. This is a first edition of this book and some inaccuracies do exist (e.g. Glasgow Coma Scale scoring). Those who wish to use this edition to enhance their knowledge base prior to an examination therefore need to be aware of this.

Some questions require very precise knowledge of definitions and values and the explanations are written in detail more akin to a revision aid. Less common topics such as medical microbiology and antimicrobials in sufficient detail to be useful in both the examination and clinical practice are covered. Therefore, aside from its use as an exam primer, the range and detail of the coverage, mean it would be a very useful reference volume for intensive care practice.

A potential shortcoming of the book, however, is the rarity of clinical vignette style questions and the absence of SBA format questions. These styles are very prevalent in the European Diploma in Intensive Care (EDIC) and are used extensively in the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine’s (ESICM) online educational resource, Patient-centred Acute Care Training (PACT). The Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine (FICM) in the UK also use clinical vignette style questioning in their sample questions. The lack of such formats in the book may explain why some questions seem to fail to reach the level of complexity reported by those with recent experience of the examinations. Thus, despite the authors’ aim to cover both FFICM and EDIC exams, this book’s question style is not entirely suited to both.

In summary, the overall content of this book is extensive and thorough and would be a handy aide-memoire companion to any candidate’s revision. In terms of examination questions the MTF format is well covered and practising this under examination timed conditions is useful preparation. However there are few clinical vignette questions and no questions in SBA format. Later editions of this book would greatly benefit from including these formats to further develop the reader’s exam technique. Minor errors which exist in the current edition also need to be addressed. Aside from its use as an exam primer, the book also serves as a useful update on current ICU topics.

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