



Preparing for the Specialty Certificate Examination

A new CPD initiative in partnership between the Young Diabetologists Forum and *Practical Diabetes International*

As all aspiring young diabetologists are now acutely aware, yet another educational training requirement has been introduced along the demanding pathway towards achieving consultant competency. Complementing traditional workplace-based assessments, the Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians has introduced Specialty Certificate Examinations (SCEs), including Diabetes & Endocrinology, to ensure that trainees (SpRs/StRs) have demonstrated a sound knowledge of their specialty topic within the context of safe and competent clinical practice at consultant level. Satisfactory completion of the SCE is now mandatory for trainees who have entered a training programme since 2007 and needs to be obtained prior to being awarded a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT).

The College examination is a computer-based knowledge assessment involving two multiple-choice papers of 100 questions each. Determining robust and discriminant questions is a difficult task, but the Royal College Federation has drafted a repository of such questions through an established process and with expert input from specialist diabetologists trained in examination question methodology. Although the Federation recommends that preparation for the examination should derive from reading up-to-date postgraduate textbooks and specialty journals, as well as through clinical experience, it is evident that a primary focus is placed on national guidelines of good clinical practice and its supportive evidence base, particularly those determined by NICE. Some diabetologists of more mature age may find that certain 'correct' answers are not entirely concordant with their own judgement, but the remit is clear – adhere to national recommended guidelines! Possibly, the specialty of Diabetes & Endocrinology is more subject to these vicissitudes which may, in part, explain the relatively low pass rates so far attained in the examination, lower than with

most other specialty topics. Not surprisingly, this has caused some concern among trainees and a recognition of need for preparatory material targeted specifically at the examination. Although the College curriculum is accessible on the MRCP website, demand for an additional practice resource of questions has been clearly identified from the body of young diabetologists in training.

With this need in mind we are pleased to announce within this issue (p xx) a new CPD learning initiative, developed in partnership between the Young Diabetologists Forum (YDF) and *Practical Diabetes International*, and supported by an unrestricted educational grant from We believe this will prove of useful benefit for SpR/StR trainees in Diabetes & Endocrinology (the latter being a parallel professional requirement combined with diabetes) and should prove of more than passing interest to established consultants and no doubt to other disciplines as well. We already have a bank of peer-reviewed questions in current examination format and in due course, subject to subsequent evaluation of this new educational tool, we plan to invite submissions for future questions with accompanying answers. By providing this CPD opportunity for those working towards the College SCE, it is our hope that a greater measure of success in the examination pass rate will be achieved and that trainees will feel that much better prepared for the test ahead.

Niru Goenka, Consultant Physician in Diabetes and Endocrinology, Countess of Chester NHS Foundation Trust, Chester, UK

Emma Wilmot, SpR, Clinical Research Fellow, Leicester Royal Infirmary, UK; Chair, Young Diabetologists Forum

Ken Shaw, Editor-in-Chief, *Practical Diabetes International*