Survey of Trainee attitudes to preparation for and participation in the FCEM examination.

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Introduction and Aims

In the UK Specialist Trainees in Emergency Medicine are required to pass the Fellowship of the College of Emergency Medicine (FCEM) examination as part of their progression to completion of training. This examination is a significant hurdle to clear as it covers clinical knowledge, attitudes and skills (SAQ and OSCE), management principles (VIVA), critical appraisal skills (written exam) and the ability to search medical literature and synthesise information (the CTR).

The aim of this study was to ascertain what resources trainees felt were most valuable in preparation for the different FCEM components. This study was also authorised by the Training Standards Committee (TSC) of the CEM who added some questions to evaluate trainee feedback on the running of the FCEM.

Methods

A questionnaire was developed in conjunction with the TSC into 10 parts covering all aspects of preparation for and experience of sitting the FCEM. E-mail addresses of those who had sat the FCEM examination in 2006 and 2007 were provided by the CEM and questionnaires were sent electronically.

Responses were collated and analysed using Microsoft Excel

Results

Nineteen of 224 emails sent were returned undeliverable and a response rate of 42% (86/203) was achieved from the remainder. About 75% of respondents felt they were well to extensively prepared (Figure 1) for their first sitting of the FCEM and 7% felt that the FCEM format differed significantly from their expectations (Figure 2).

![Figure 1. Overall FCEM preparedness.](image1)

![Figure 2. Expectation of FCEM format.](image2)

Yearly mock exams were not available to 19% of candidates and 9% had no access to a regular journal club. The overall importance of different preparation modalities is outlined in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Importance of FCEM preparation modalities](image3)

The results of the more specific questions on the different sections of the FCEM revealed that exam based practice with peers, small group learning and local trainer involvement were consistently the highest rated in terms of importance by the trainees.

Examiner behaviour was felt to be generally good in the OSCE but some criticisms were levelled at the running of the VIVA examinations.

Conclusions

The results of this questionnaire demonstrate what trainee’s value most in preparation for the FCEM examination. Training programmes around the country should make sure that facilities and expertise are available at a local level to allow trainees to access everything that is considered important in order to pass the FCEM.