

*Book review***Extended-matching questions for finals**

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Multiple-choice question (MCQ) tests have been used for assessments for a long time now and are easy to mark by computer. It is not as easy to write good ones as is sometimes thought, however. MCQ questions can have a number of flaws, as has gradually been realised over the years. In addition, they often ask for recall of isolated pieces of information which goes against our wish to get students to *use* knowledge rather than work by memorisation. Moreover, the approach taken by many students is to answer by eliminating likely incorrect answers rather than by actually knowing the correct one. Intelligent and well-read students who agonise over a question's wording may take longer to come up with an answer and may possibly disadvantage themselves by spending extra time.

In the medical field, extended matching sets-type questions (EMSQs) have now been used for several years. On a stated topic area a scenario (e.g. a brief clinical case or *vignette*) is described and candidates are offered a list of up to about 20 possible responses from which to choose the (usually) one best answer. With so many choices it is almost impossible to answer by elimination. Having read the vignette, the good student should be able to solve the problem or decide on the diagnosis and then simply check off the correct response. More and more medical schools are adopting this format, but there is no reason why this type of question should not be used in other topic areas.

This book offers 150 extended matching sets questions, all from the medical field (hence the 'finals' in the book's title), to help students to practice, but it would also be useful to faculty looking for models for their own question papers. The authors have chosen a standard format for all the questions. Each question has four parts:

- a *theme* (e.g. Diabetes), and then there is
- a *question* (e.g. "For each of the following patients with diabetes mellitus, select the correct classification."),
- followed by a list of 10 possible *responses* (e.g. **A** Diabetes due to chronic pancreatitis; **B** Drug induced diabetes; **C** Gestational diabetes, etc, **A–J**),
- and then there are five *vignettes*, or separate problems (e.g. "A 23-year-old woman with cystic fibrosis has a random blood glucose of 18 mmol/l").

The student has to read the vignettes and then choose a response from **A–J** for each of the five. All this, i.e. each theme, the list and the questions, appears as one page of the book: turning over the page one finds the 'correct'

answers and short paragraph on background and explanation. Consequently the student can test him or herself before looking at the answer. EMSQs may be a bit more difficult to write than MCQs, but in fact, having written the list of responses, several questions (vignettes/problems) can be set which use these. It is recommended that there should be at least six responses, and preferably more, in order to try to prevent students answering by elimination and to allow there to be a number of questions (vignettes) corresponding to each list.

The book is intended for medical students and, therefore, there are not many "bioscience" questions. Nevertheless, anyone interested in using extended matching sets questions, would find the question sets offered here invaluable as models.

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