

Perplexed as to how to get through the MRCP 1 exam?

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Hello everyone. I would like to present all what I have learned by moderating the MRCP 1 forum at RxPG. For months, it had been a roller coaster ride, right upto to the exam and continues to date too. Every now and then I see someone coming up with a post as to be asking how to prepare for this exam. I have a few very basic and concrete suggestions which should form the base of your studying pyramid and you can then gradually build your knowledge upon it. All what I say here has been my experience with support from other doctors opinions and the RxPG MRCP 1 forum's members comments.

The exam will test your ability to deal with a patient and not with a MCQ. Numerous questions will come in the exam for which you will have to think the way as if you are on call and the patient is in front of you. You will ask yourself, what will I do? The exam tests your clinical judgment and not just theoretical knowledge. No matter how good one is in the books, clinical experience matters most. Sitting at home and studying won't help. One needs to have constant clinical bedside exposure along side preparation.

Coming up to the most frequently asked question, how much time does it take to prepare.

This seemed for me initially a very challenging question because I met people who had studied for a year right up to those who had even studied for only 2 weeks. The people who had studied for a year almost were those who had been doing jobs, with hectic calls, less time to study. They needed time to settle with the books and the typical exam question pattern. Those who took around less than a month were those who had already given some other exam like the USMLE step 2 or had been very good grads in the medical school years or had just been sitting at home with a full time dedicated paid study leave. The question very often asked as to how much time needed to study will depend on your own surrounding habits, associated work and your own dedication. You need to dictate yourself, no one's study plan will help you.

Settling the 'time' factor, I come up to the from where to study part. There's a list of never ending posts as to what books to consult for the MRCP 1. Again, citing above example, I go along. A friend of mine never used to go or review books, he used to say that reading a text book gives him satisfaction and a strong core of knowledge. Another friend of mine used to depend very much on review books. He used to remark as to no matter if studying less, but it should be done with utmost smartness. Reading tons and tons of pages won't help, neither would highlighting a already 200 page book will make you pass the exam. It is all upon one's own level of knowledge which one should take into account before starting to study for this exam. Do you want yourself to start off with some heavy dose of text from a book like Parveen Kumar or do you already have a basic sound yet almost strong base to start off with a book like Philip Kalra. Remember, none of the PG exams around the world have anything similar between them and no one can rely on any other's study pattern. A person scoring in the 90th centile in the USMLE 2 doesn't necessarily can pass the MRCP 1 exam also. Both are totally world apart exams.

Finally books. If there are two books which need to be read, one is Basic Medical Sciences by Phillipa Easterbrook and the other Essential revision notes for MRCP by Philip Kalra. All other books apart from these will be your own choice. People supplement these two books from OHCM/OHCS, Parveen Kumar/Davidson. What may be a very good book for someone else, might be useless for you. Lastly left, online question websites have their very important share for you to practice questions from. In this regard, only 2 websites make their impression. On examination and Emrcp. The rest of the websites like 123doc and Pastest simply don't reflect the pattern of the exam.

Summarizing:

- make your own plan, don't be impressed by someone who scored very good in the MRCP either by reading Kumar or Kalra, you are a master of your own self, respect yourself and your plans/decisions.
- Remain in touch with the patients, they are your knowledge, bread and butter.

- Practice, practice and practice those nifty one best questions from all available books in the market and after you have done so, again practice.
- Remember, failing this exam doesn't mean you are stupid, only giving this exam requires a big heart, so if God forbid you fail, don't loose heart. Remember the best doctors have been those who were the average one's during their academic years.
- Finally, share. Sharing will help you point out your own weaknesses. Be active on the forum. I see users only posting when their results have been announced and they have passed, whilst all the time, they had been peeping into the threads thinking of getting a snap on any available stuff but not sharing. This is a shameful and disturbing act.

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