

RCoA Research, Education & Travel Grants 2017

Award: Belfast Fund

Applicant: Dr James Bowness

Project Title: *Anatomy for the FRCA Course*

Project Description:

For many, anatomy is a particularly daunting component of the FRCA examination. The 2013-2014 Review of the RCoA Final Exam stated "the lack of even basic knowledge of anatomy has been identified over a number of years, reflecting the fall in teaching of basic sciences at undergraduate level. The need to learn and test anatomy remains of fundamental importance...". The Chairman's Report of the SAQ exam from October 2012 stated "many candidates had poor knowledge of the innervation of the anterior abdominal wall". The March 2014 SAQ exam saw a 44.4% pass rate on a question regarding the vagus nerve.

I am a former surgical trainee with two years experience of anatomy demonstrating and I undertake formal anatomy teaching for the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. I therefore felt relatively comfortable with this aspect of the exam. After completing the Final FRCA, my deanery asked me to contribute an anatomy tutorial to our regional teaching programme. This session highlighted a lack of anatomical knowledge held by many anaesthetic trainees and, more surprisingly, their lack of understanding of where and how they may improve it.

With another anaesthesia specialty registrar, I designed a high quality, low cost course to disseminate anatomical knowledge and understanding for candidates studying towards both parts of the FRCA. A pilot, in August 2017, proved successful: positive feedback highlighted the learning environment, varied teaching style and exam orientated nature of the course.

Anatomy MCQs and SAQs were distributed in advance, and reviewed on the course in an interactive session involving demonstration on cadaveric material and models. Delegates then undertook an anatomy OSCE, which was reviewed in small groups. Material was presented in Final FRCA format through two four-part anatomy SOEs, again with use of models and cadaveric material. The final session involved ultrasound scanning of volunteers to demonstrate sonoanatomy seen in regional anaesthesia, with demonstration of the same structures on adjacent cadaveric material.

We aimed to create a non-threatening, learning environment. The faculty comprised of experienced anatomists and anaesthetists, paired throughout to maintain the high quality and accurate anatomical teaching with reference to clinical practice. The course was hosted by the School of Medicine at St Andrews University, which has excellent anatomy facilities and enthusiastic, supportive staff.

We plan to run the course annually, to raise the standard of anatomy knowledge held by anaesthetic trainees and boost confidence when preparing for exams. The experience has also developed our own organisational and management skills. For

the next course (spring 2018) we aim to raise awareness of the event in other deaneries. We would like to request modest sums to pay for advertising and promotional material, and subsidise facility hire to maintain low candidate costs. In future, a small registration fee (£50 - £75 per person, including food) will cover all course expenses. In time, we will also seek sponsorship from relevant organisations (e.g. ultrasound equipment manufacturers) to subsidise expenses and maintain low course fees.