



General Certificate of Education

Health and Social Care 8621/8623

HC06 Common Diseases and Disorders

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – June series

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HCO6 COMMON DISEASES AND DISORDERS PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

General comments

It is pleasing to report some scripts with very high marks from able candidates on this paper with very low scoring scripts being few and far between. All four questions proved to be accessible to the vast majority.

As in previous series, the work of the higher-ability candidate was characterised by good use of technical terminology and detailed responses. Weaker scripts often contained vague and repetitive answers. There was virtually no evidence that candidates had insufficient time to complete the paper.

Question 1

(a) The main symptoms of meningitis that Aaron was likely to have were well known. Candidates were less secure in their knowledge of how these symptoms are caused.

(b) The vast majority of candidates knew that ringworm is caused by a fungus and were able to describe two different symptoms successfully.

(c) Some weaker candidates did not gain a mark in part (i) by offering inhalation or droplet infection when breathing had already been given in the stem of the question.

In part (ii), candidates' responses were generally more successful than similar questions on previous papers, recognising that disease-causing organisms affect the body by damaging cells and tissues directly, taking nutrients from host cells and/or stimulating the body's immune system. Some weaker candidates suggested incorrectly that the effects were caused by the immune system's inability to respond.

In part (iii), most were able to gain at least two of the three marks available for suggesting suitable preventative strategies for minimising the risk of disease for individuals.

Question 2

(a) Most candidates gained at least four marks by successfully drawing conclusions about the incidence of allergic reactions caused by the three food allergens. Higher-ability candidates recognised that there was little change in the incidence of food allergen 2 and 3 in both years, but that food allergen 1 had significantly reduced. This may be due to heightened awareness by susceptible individuals.

(b) Candidates demonstrated very sound understanding of what is meant by an allergic reaction and what are common food allergens. Many candidates gave very detailed and accurate accounts of how a skin allergy test is performed, but some weaker answers confused the methodology of applying a small sample of allergen taped to the skin on a disc with gently scraping the skin surface with the allergen.

Question 3

Astigmatism was generally understood well by the vast majority.

The weakest candidates, however, suggested it was a dental disorder.

Tinnitus was very well understood.

In the second part of the question candidates generally had more difficulty especially with the question on dentrifice. Some candidates thought this referred to a special type of toothbrush. Flossing was generally known well. It is pleasing to report that the understanding of the prevention of dental caries and related disorders was improved compared to similar questions on previous papers.

Question 4

(a) Candidates' responses in parts (i) and (iii) demonstrated good understanding of different common causes of headaches and what is meant by a migraine. As on previous papers how headaches are caused pain proved more challenging.

(b) Candidates generally did well on this question. Weaker candidates often confused blackhead formation with dirt rather than sebum and melanin-blocking pores. Blisters and scabs produced generally sound responses.

Grade boundaries

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