



General Certificate of Education

**Health and Social Care
8626/8629**

HC14 Diagnosis and Treatment

Report on the Examination

2008 examination – June series

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HC14 – DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT PRINCIPAL EXAMINER’S REPORT

General comments

It is pleasing to report a significant number of very good scripts and relatively few very poor ones for this unit.

Candidates generally were able to access all four questions and provide detailed responses using appropriate technical language across the various areas of the specification.

There was virtually no evidence of candidates having insufficient time to complete the test.

Question 1

(a) Candidates generally demonstrated a sound understanding of how body temperature is measured.

Likewise, there were many good answers on the testing of reflexes, mostly employing the knee jerk reaction.

(b) Common methods of physical examination were clearly understood by the vast majority. Most gained marks for offering percussion, palpation and/or blood pressure and/or use of a stethoscope.

(c) Candidates generally understood that computer data bases could help diagnose illness by suggesting provisional diagnoses if given a particular set of symptoms.

Weaker candidates sometimes omitted that GPs may use computers to store the medical histories of individual patients.

(d) Weaker candidates appeared to be relying on rote learning when they attempted to answer this question on contrast x-rays. As a consequence they often confused this technique with the taking of x-rays without contrast media.

Candidates were also sometimes confused by the light and dark areas which would appear on the x-ray.

Some candidates concentrated their answers on how the contrast medium would be introduced into the body rather than explain how digestive problems can be tested and monitored by this technique.

Question 2

(a) There were many sound attempts at this data question with candidates comparing successfully the incidence of the disorders between male and female in-patients of the hospital. Higher-ability candidates gained high marks when they suggested reasons for the different numbers, e.g. the relatively high numbers of circulatory disease possibly being associated with smoking, poor diet and lack of exercise.

(b) Most candidates were able to gain at least half marks by outlining successfully how electrocardiography is performed.

Similarly, most were able to gain two of the four marks available for explaining how Lou’s heart dysfunction maybe identified from the electrocardiogram. These marks were usually gained for explaining the regular pattern created by electrical activity in normal heartbeats and an irregular pattern associated with dysfunction.

Only higher-ability candidates pointed out that particular disorders can be identified from different irregular patterns.

(c) Most candidates were able to identify a suitable illness which may be diagnosed by a blood test, but many failed to gain full marks by not offering detail of how this is done.

Question 3

(a) All but the weakest candidates gained full marks by giving generic and chemical answers.

(b) The methods for administering drugs other than by mouth were well understood, but the different reasons why not all drugs are taken by mouth less so. Candidates found the last part of this question most challenging, but those who were successful generally gained marks for mentioning the possibility of allergic reaction to components in the drug, the severity of side-effects and/or personal choice.

(c) Intensive care produced some good answers but the weakest candidates sometimes confused it with emergency procedures. The basic principles of hospital nursing were generally understood well, with the majority of candidates gaining at least half marks.

(d) The vast majority of candidates suggested bed rest and over-the-counter drugs to gain the two marks.

Question 4

(a) Tissue biopsy was understood by all but the weakest candidates who occasionally confused the process with transplant surgery. Radiotherapy was similarly understood well by the majority. Weaker candidates sometimes suggested the use of lasers in this treatment and were confused by the use of internal pellets.

(b) There were many good answers here with candidates understanding that Rufus has a right to be consulted, may choose the treatment he receives, may wish to consider the quality of life he may enjoy and/or the side-effects that treatment may cause.

(c) The majority of candidates were able to gain three or four marks for suitable lifestyle choices that may reduce the effectiveness of medical treatment. Some weak answers reversed the question and suggested positive lifestyle choices.

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