AQA

General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2011

History A 4040

40401A

40401B

40404A

40404B

Report on the Examination

40401A and 40404A Medicine through Time

General points

This was the second year of the new specification with the examination being taken both by candidates at the end of two years of study or after just one year of study (and probably in Year 10 of secondary education). The examination discriminated well with candidates of all ability levels having the opportunity to show their knowledge and understanding.

Written expression was good throughout and candidates used the question paper / answer booklet to effect although many candidates did require additional writing pages. This in itself was testimony to the accessibility of the content and the wide ranging knowledge candidates had at their disposal. It did also, however, point to the need for some candidates to be more selective in their use of the knowledge they had at their disposal. They wanted to tell the story before using the knowledge to address the question set. The visual sources for Question 1 (Disease and Infection) were again effective in providing candidates with valuable information. Source B had the additional support of a diary extract which was well used in conjunction with the visual source.

Some candidates may have benefitted from better time management as performance occasionally appeared to tail off towards the end of the paper and some may have benefitted from greater experience of mock papers.

A small number of candidates took 40404A, the short course version of this paper. This involved the completion of Question 1 and one other question, with time to complete the paper adjusted accordingly. As with 40401A there was little evidence that candidates were short of time, although there were a number of rubric infringements, with a significant minority answering three questions rather than two. These tended to be weaker candidates who performed at a similar standard in both optional questions chosen.

Short course candidates performed best on Question 1 and many had developed the skills needed in handling visual sources. Questions 3 and 5 were the most popular of the optional questions.

Section A: Disease and Infection

This section of the paper was tackled well by most candidates. Their skills in drawing inferences from visual sources and interpreting the evidence were well developed. The questions seemed accessible to candidates of all abilities. There was occasionally some confusion as to which sources to use. In question 1(b), for example, some weaker candidates tended to also refer to Source C which was not a requirement of the question.

Question 1(a)

This opening question provided candidates with the opportunity to begin the paper with a positive experience. Very few candidates simply described the visual source. There were informed inferences from almost all, with many developing a complex answer which explained, for example, the role of Asklepios, his daughters, the snake in a 'supernatural' response and on the other hand the role of the 'doctors' in giving herbal treatments and a more natural set of cures. There was some confusion over the votives hanging on the walls as some thought these were actual body parts and began to discuss the study of anatomy. Some candidates were not

able to differentiate between early and later Greek medical practice and as a result discussed the four humours in this response.

Question 1(b)

This question produced some of the best responses. Candidates used the picture to suggest a more scientific approach to medicine by reference to the book on display, even suggesting which book it was and linking it to the growth in illustrated medical texts. They used the ascription to suggest that the diary of Sir Charles Scarburgh was acting as a medical record for the doctor and used the diary to link treatment to the four humours and supernatural cures with additional reference to the use of Bezoar stone. This combined use of a visual source and a written source proved to be very effective for candidates. It is important for candidates to remember that this question asks for them to use Source A and Source B, plus their knowledge, in their answer. Some focused on only Source B while others also included Source C.

Question 1(c)

Question 1(b) required the candidates to identify differences in the treatment of disease whereas question 1(c) focussed on the reasons why treatment differed. Weaker candidates did tend to repeat large elements of their answers to 1(b) before then tackling the question set. This same comment applied in 2010 and it would therefore be useful for centres to practise the technique for answering this style of "why" question. As noted earlier in this report, some also referred to Source C and so answers moved beyond the parameters of 400BC to the late 17th century. Many responses were very good even though some candidates tended to write much more than was necessary to gain the marks on offer. A successful approach to this question was one where candidates referred to the key factors impacting on treatment of disease. There was a good range of knowledge applied, including references to the four humours and a growing scientific approach to treatment. Some lost the focus of the question though and wrote at length about the developments in anatomy - candidates need to be aware that the paper is divided into three distinct areas and should focus their answers accordingly.

Question 1(d)

Source C provided a good *aide-memoire* for candidates although possibly the familiarity of the topic meant that many wanted to tell the story of the work of Fleming, Florey and Chain before they tackled the question as set. Again, it would be useful for centres to practise those extended writing techniques which moved the most able candidates away from a narrative approach toward more analytical approach. Responses which were factor-led were more likely to reach the higher levels.

Weaker candidates tended to focus solely on Source C and/or resorted to narrative. Although this approach may have touched upon a number of factors it tended to cover a much narrower time frame. There were relatively few 'top' answers which "develop out of level three and evaluate the relative importance of individual factors". Candidates tended to cover a range of factors in turn (eg science, technology, the role of the individual, chance and warfare) without making an evaluative judgement either at the start, within or at the end of their response. Some strayed into a response centred on Public Health.

Section B: Public Health

The focus of this section was on Public Health. Some candidates continued to focus on the development of Disease and Infection – clearly this is very poor exam technique.

Question 2(a)

Question 2 was a much more popular choice than Question 3. This question provided candidates with a broad range to consider and this no doubt contributed to its popularity as a question. However, it is important with all such optional questions that candidates are aware that they need to be able to discuss both factors in the second part. Some had a strong knowledge and understanding of the role of individuals or governments but were weaker on the second area. This therefore meant that they were less confident with the 2(b) response.
Some focused on a single issue within their chosen factor. For example, they might have a good knowledge of Roman Public Health but not other periods and as a result were not able to provide the broader context needed for level 2 answers.

Question 2(b)

Some candidates focused solely on the factor they had used to answer 2(a). This had the impact of limiting them to a top level 2 answer. The same issue was commented upon in the 2010 report.

However, those with a good knowledge of the role of Governments and individuals were able to achieve level 3 quite easily. Some candidates asserted a judgement, but without historical knowledge to show their depth of understanding they were limited to level 2.

Question 3(a)

The first epidemic was the Black Death in the fourteenth century and it was expected that candidates would recognise that this was not a question which required any reference to the Plague of 1665-1666, still less the impact of the Great Fire of London. As regards the second epidemic, an area of confusion was the importance of the role of John Snow in dealing with Cholera. Many candidates wanted to tell the story of the Broad Street pump and saw it as the sole reason why Cholera ended in the nineteenth century. This was a very common misconception.

Question 3(b)

In order to answer part (b) it was important that candidates had knowledge of both epidemic diseases. Unlike many of those who responded to 2(a), the majority of candidates could follow on from 3(a) with a comparative response to 3(b). However the comparisons here tended to lack detail so fewer candidates were awarded level 3.

Section C: Surgery and Anatomy

Both questions proved popular with the candidates as they covered mainstream topics. Responses to Question 5 tended to be of a higher quality, although the vast majority of candidates were able to produce level 2 or level 3 responses to both questions. As with Questions 2 and 3, it is important to note that that candidates needed knowledge of both developments or individuals in order to answer the (b) questions to greatest effect.

Question 4(a)

A small number of candidates mixed up anaesthetics and antibiotics. The majority however, had a good understanding of both named developments. It was anticipated that candidates would look at the positive and the negative influences of their chosen development. This was much more common with answers to the development of anaesthetics. Examiners particularly noted the in-depth knowledge of the development of anaesthetics on display.

Question 4(b)

Some candidates centred their answers on one development and made only a fleeting reference to the other. This limited the number of candidates who achieved a top level.
It was important to make clear comparisons in order to gain a top level. Most assumed that judgement should be based solely on the level of public opposition, but some made the judgement on the basis of professional opposition of surgeons. These tended to be candidates who focused on antiseptics in their response to 4(a) and this approach was generally rewarded at the top level.

Question 5(a)

Candidates conveyed good knowledge of both of these individuals. Over half of the candidates attempting this question gained a level 2 mark. Andreas Vesalius and Ambroise Paré were clearly well known and their importance understood.

Question 5(b)

Performance on 5(b) tended to reflect performance on 5(a). There were very few level 1 responses and most candidates were able to make clear comparisons between Vesalius and Paré. Knowledge of both pioneers was extensive and there was an equal divide as to which pioneer contributed the most to medical progress, with some genuine debate within the answers.

40401B and 40404B Media through Time

General points

This was the first time there had been an entry for 40401B. The quality of candidates work appeared to be significantly higher in the full GCSE course compared to that of the small entry entering the short course.

Most candidates had been well prepared and demonstrated a good historical knowledge of the topics studied – given the paucity of text book, provision this reflects well on their teachers.

Question 1: Controlling the Mass Media

The three visual sources provided a strong stimulus to support responses to each part of this question. Candidates performed especially well on Questions 1(a) and 1(b). In 1(a) many candidates recognised that writing was a form of power in Ancient Egypt alongside the social barriers it created for the poor. The most able candidates could make clear links between writing, religious status and the class system which existed. Source B provided a significantly different view of the control of the media, allowing candidates to explain the political impact of broadsheets, the role of government and the impact of technology. Question 1(c) saw some

strong level 2 answers covering time and place and the role of religion in society, the balance between control and communication and the class system. Question 1(d) proved to be the most difficult of questions in this section of the paper. As with the Medicine option, an approach centred on key causal factors (eg wealth, the Church, Government, politics, technology, literacy in society and warfare) elicited higher level responses.

Question 2 and 3: The Development of the Media

Question 2 was more popular than Question 3. As in Option A, candidates needed to make sure that they could write effectively about both key factors in part (b) questions – in Question 2 these were 'Individuals' and 'Science and Technology') and most did so. This was not the case with Question 3 where most were quite well informed about the development of newspapers but fell back on very general knowledge of the development of television.

In Question 2(a) many candidates focused too much on describing the technological breakthroughs rather than their importance in the wider context and as such limited themselves to a level 1 answer. Many did offer a good depth of knowledge on individuals such as Northcliffe, Rothermere and Caxton as well as Berners-Lee, as might be anticipated. In 2(b) many linked the individual to the technological development and as such did not come to a final judgment on which factor contributed more to the development of the mass media in Britain.

Performance overall was stronger on Question 3. Many candidates answered Question 3 (a) quite well, but were let down by their 3(b) responses. In 3(a) many discussed the style and purpose of newspapers to real effect. Those who had a good knowledge of the development of newspapers and television performed well on this question, using a wide range of knowledge of (eg) newsbooks, the Political Register, Northcliffe, Beaverbrook, Rupert Murdoch, Tiny Rowland and Hugh Greene.

Question 4 and 5 : The Social and Political Impact of the Mass Media:

Question 4 was selected by very few candidates. Those tackling Question 5 tended to perform to a higher standard. In Question 5, knowledge of the development of the internet was good, as might be expected, but to be effective, it did need to go beyond knowledge based on everyday use and draw on historical knowledge and understanding. It was important in responses to Question 5 that candidates wrote about the influence on society and politics rather than simply about the wider ranging opportunities the internet provided. Those who realised this produced some high quality responses at the top level.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the
Results statistics page of the AQA Website.

UMS conversion calculator: www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion