



CMSA

The Colleges of Medicine of South Africa NPC

Nonprofit Company (Reg No. 1955/000003/08)
Nonprofit Organisation (Reg. No. 009-874 NPO)
Vat No. 4210273191

17 Milner Road, RONDEBOSCH 7700

Tel: +27 21 689-9533/4/5; +27 21 689-3161 Fax: +27 21 685-3766

COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE

President: Dr S Lahri
Email: slahri7@gmail.com
Cell: 082 664 2421

Website:
General:
Accounts
Membership:

www.cmsa.co.za
general@cmsa.co.za
accounts@cmsa.co.za
members@cmsa.co.za

Letter from the President of the College of Emergency Medicine regarding changes to examination formats

Dear Colleagues,

It is essential that we evolve and change as a specialty and as a college, to reflect the dynamic nature of emergency medicine practices and standards. Our goal is for a world class emergency medicine workforce, and as such our assessment strategies must align with global educational standards. Maintaining the validity and standard of the examinations we conduct are paramount.

The pandemic necessitated a change in the way examinations were conducted. The Colleges of Medicine in South Africa, including the College of Emergency Medicine (CEM), adapted, embraced, and innovated towards a virtual platform. This is encouraging since technology plays a much more significant role in medical education. Due to our agile approach, we are constantly experimenting with and adopting new ways to provide the most accurate and reliable evaluation methods to our candidates.

The CEM, under guidance from the CMSA, converted all written exams to Single Based Answer (SBA) MCQ and Stimulus (Image-based) MCQ formats over the course of nine months. This is better suited to assessing higher levels of clinical knowledge, such as problem-solving and decision-making skills. The style of MCQ examination was also converted into a clinical stem with the single best answer (SBA). This was both extremely challenging and rewarding as new questions had to be developed, standard set and moderated within a short period.

In addition to the above-mentioned changes, the CEM facilitated a virtual roadshow for all candidates to explain the new format of MCQs and how to approach and answer them. The feedback from this initiative was very positive.

Our pass rates have been consistent while maintaining the validity and standard of our examinations.

Future changes

The rules and regulations are being updated to reflect the changing demands of Emergency care education in South Africa. We believe that the Dip PEC should be a recognition of robust experience and learning in Emergency Medicine. Therefore, **twelve months of supervised experience** in emergency medicine will replace the current six months requirement. The change will take effect from the **first semester 2023** examinations onwards. The 80 cap will also be removed, so that all those who wish to attempt the exam will have access and opportunity.

Competence involves more than “know-how”; it requires that candidates also “show how” and demonstrate their ability to “do” independently, and the college council believes that building and assessing medical officer competence requires many practice opportunities and cannot be reliably assessed on one exam day where there are many factors at play. As of the First Semester 2023, the Dip PEC(SA) will consist only of two MCQ papers, with the performance exam components assessed as MCQs instead of the traditional "clinical" exam. The CEM will actively train and support a network of clinical supervisors countrywide to provide surrogate assessments of clinical competency through the pre-entry "supervisor statement," confirming that the candidate is capable of safely and independently performing the clinical and professional tasks and skills required of a general medical officer. We believe that these changes will maintain the value of the Dip PEC as a qualification by and for Emergency Medicine but also make it accessible to those committed to learning emergency medicine and also feasible as a national examination.

Our examinations continue to be recognised for their fairness and high standards, and they have been updated to reflect contemporary best educational and assessment practices and developments in Emergency Medicine. We can still maintain the validity and standard of the examination even with the special measures, processes, and adaptations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In high-stakes examinations, they are especially important.

As events of the past two years have demonstrated, the most vulnerable and sickest patients are dependent on our specialty, and our workforce provides that care with dedication and commitment. For this purpose, CEM will continue setting, monitoring, and maintaining the highest professional, clinical, and examination standards possible.

Yours sincerely,

Sa'ad Lahri

Dr Sa'ad Lahri
President, College of Emergency Medicine (South Africa)
23/3/2022