

Objective structural clinical examinations in psychiatry

OSCEs in Psychiatry. Ed. by Albert Michael. Pp. 210. Illustrated. Elsevier Science Limited. 2004. ISBN 0-443-07297-3.

Objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs), using real or simulated patients, were developed with a view to improve what some regard as unreliable traditional examination methods by standardising variability in both patients and candidate assessment. As such they are a fairly new phenomenon in the field of psychiatry and have only recently replaced the so-called 'long case' in the UK Royal College of Psychiatrists Part 1 examinations. The aim of this volume is therefore to afford candidates from different countries and medical schools an opportunity to prepare

themselves for the range of possible OSCE scenarios that could be encountered when undertaking these examinations.

The volume impresses as well written with information presented in an easy to read format. The list of topics is well chosen and comprehensive, including not only the most important psychiatric scenarios but also a number of allied medical areas such as assessment of ECGs, fundoscopy, resuscitation principles and cranial nerve examination. Although some chapters are not relevant to South Africa (e.g. the UK Mental Health Act), valuable general principles can be garnered from all. Also take special note of the South African contributions!

Owing to the current differences in our own examination proce-

dures this volume can not strictly be regarded as a study guide for the South African market. However it should prove valuable to a wide range of clinicians, starting from final year medical students, going through to junior psychiatric registrars as well as general practitioners who need to jog their memory with regard to mental health issues. As such I would recommend it as a comprehensive, handy and accessible addition to their bookshelves.

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