



e-Learning Anaesthesia Integrated Anaesthesia Learning Portal

www.e-LA.org.uk

When I was a registrar in the mid 1990s, I can remember a novice SHO confidently asserting that he would like to attempt Part 1 of the then 3-part FRCA examination before he had completed his first three months of supervised training. This caused uproar. The consultants within the department were clearly divided in their opinions as to whether the notion should be supported or indeed allowed, on the grounds that the trainee was still very inexperienced in the actual practice of anaesthesia. The issue raised debates about the need for a balanced approach to the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical clinical experience.

Last year the Royal College of Anaesthetists relaxed its regulations governing the time when trainees are considered eligible to sit the FRCA examination.¹ The 12-month training requirement was removed for eligibility to sit the Primary OSCE and SOEs, and the 30-month training requirement was removed for eligibility to sit the Final FRCA examination. Although it is recommended that trainees complete at least half of their basic level training first, it is possible for trainees to enter for the Multiple Choice Examination (MCQ) as soon as they have passed the Initial Assessment of Competency in an approved training post, and it is now possible to sit the Primary MCQ an unlimited number of times.

Clearly, College Tutors will continue to provide invaluable support to trainees to help them to prepare adequately in advance of the FRCA examination. However, more than ever before, there is now, a need to provide clear guidance directly from the College to help trainees to prepare appropriately for the examination.

The e-Learning Anaesthesia project (www.e-LA.org.uk) is an educational initiative that has been undertaken jointly by the Royal College of Anaesthetists and the Department of Health. The primary aim of the project is to support delivery of the ST1/2 curriculum and associated training. The curriculum has been organised into six educational blocks (Figure 1) that are designed to accompany clinical units of training from the first three months of supernumerary attachment to the level of competence previously associated with the certificate of completion of SHO training. A seventh block, comprising basic science elements, underpins the other six blocks and covers knowledge that complements the more clinical aspects.

All ST1 trainees who register with the College for training in 2008 will be able to access the e-LA programme as they progress through their first two years of training. It will provide structured theoretical knowledge to accompany the practical aspects of clinical training and, perhaps most importantly, a guide to the standard of knowledge required at Primary FRCA level.

This web-based system provides access for all UK anaesthetists to on-line tutorials that will support the FRCA curriculum for trainees, whilst simultaneously providing

an interactive CPD library for accredited specialists. Approximately one thousand 20-minute tutorials or 'e-sessions' have been carefully selected to cover aspects of the curriculum known to present conceptual difficulties to candidates. The e-sessions themselves are designed around a common format. Objectives are defined at the outset and are explored in a manner that encourages the user to interact with the computer to explore the topic.

To accommodate different levels of pre-existing knowledge, information is presented both in depth and in note form. Diagrams and graphs can be animated or constructed in a structured fashion, as one might expect of an able candidate presenting material across the examination table in the Primary FRCA. Understanding and retention of the material presented in these sessions is then tested by numerous self-assessment knowledge checks. 'e-Learning Anaesthesia' is intended to complement existing learning resources, but production of the material in the form of interactive sessions will help to demonstrate the breadth and standard of knowledge required of the FRCA examination in a style that enhances conceptual understanding of the underlying principles.

Figure 1 Block structure for the e-LA curriculum

BLOCK 1	BLOCK 2	BLOCK 3	BLOCK 4	BLOCK 5	BLOCK 6
An introduction to clinical anaesthesia	Consolidating basic clinical practice	Introduction to critical care	Principles of obstetric, paediatric and geriatric anaesthesia	Regional anaesthesia and pain management	Critical incident case scenarios and examination practice
BLOCK 7 Basic sciences: anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, physics/clinical measurement, equipment					

Figure 2 Register for access at www.e-LA.org.uk



Q: Who can use e-Learning Anaesthesia?

A: This educational resource is accessible to all UK anaesthetists: trainees; consultants; SAS grades; and acute common stem trainees. Generic elements of the e-LA project will also be made available to other acute medical specialties and foundation doctors.

Q: How do I gain access to e-LA?

A: Go to the portal website (www.e-LA.org.uk) to apply for a username and password. You will need to know your GMC number and College reference number. Trainees who have not yet registered with the College can still apply for a username, but will need to complete a College registration form as well.

Q: When will e-Learning Anaesthesia be fully active?

A: There are already fully functional pharmacology sessions loaded onto the Learning Management System (LMS) for demonstration purposes. The e-session syllabus has been defined and a list of the proposed 950 sessions can now be downloaded in pdf format. Complete topics will be rolled-out over the next 18 months with the entire curriculum available from 2009.

Q: Is this just an expensive on-line textbook?

A: e-LA is not simply a textbook. Complex concepts are explored and carefully assembled using frame-by-frame animations to illustrate the underlying points. In terms of style, editors and authors have striven to create sessions that present the best factual elements of an expert lecture or book article but maintain the interactive benefits of a face-to-face tutorial. Sessions are carefully cross-referenced and presented in a format that encourages reflective learning with numerous self-assessment exercises. Some of these exercises provide additional feedback at key stages by allowing the trainee to compare their own self-assessment score with an

average score of all other trainees who have sat that assessment at an equivalent stage of training. The LMS keeps track of an individual's progress through the curriculum, and offers access to archives of support and reference material published by scientific journals.

Q: Isn't this just for trainees?

A: No, the curriculum covers the knowledge base required for the Primary FRCA but will form an invaluable CPD resource for career grade anaesthetists. The content of sessions within a clinical or basic science block will provide consultants with background material to underpin clinical tutorials and in-theatre teaching.

e-Learning Anaesthesia went live in January 2008. It is one of the most exciting and significant educational developments that the College has ever undertaken. Please take the time to peruse the demonstration sessions that are now available at www.e-LA.org.uk.

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PS In case you were wondering, the novice SHO described at the beginning of this article was allowed to sit the Part 1 examination early and passed on his first attempt. Furthermore, he went on to pass the Part 2 examination three months later!

Reference

- 1 Primary and Final FRCA Examination Regulations. *RCoA*, April 2007.

Figure 3 The e-LA portal will provide access to on-line tutorials, self-assessment exercises, examination practice, an e-library, personal revision notes, a web-based e-logbook, discussion forums, and the core elements of an e-portfolio

