PEER VIII: Physician’s Evaluation and Educational Review in Emergency Medicine

Wagner MJ
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There are several main review texts and a variety of question banks on the market that help prepare emergency residents and physicians for the major American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) examinations. One of the standards in examination preparation is the Physician’s Evaluation and Educational Review in Emergency Medicine, better known as “PEER.” The PEER series continues with the recent release of PEER VIII, and physicians preparing for the ABEM In-training, Qualifying, or ConCert examinations can rest assured that their money and time will be well spent investing in this resource.

Physicians familiar with the PEER series will find the familiar question format similar to the style of questions on the various ABEM examinations. Most are higher-order questions—for example, giving clues to a diagnosis of gastritis and then requiring the reader to select the appropriate therapy of antibiotics, with the implied understanding that Helicobacter pylori infection is the most common cause of gastritis. Each question has a thorough answer explanation that discusses why the listed choice is the most correct answer, as well as why the other choices are incorrect. Just as with the ABEM examinations (and incidentally just as maddening), many of the PEER VIII questions require the reader to pick the “most correct” of multiple feasible options. It is this ability of PEER VIII to delve into the nuances of test question strategy that sets it above other resources. Better yet, each of the 450 questions is new to prevent repeats from previous editions.

New to PEER VIII is the integration of online test taking to complement the print edition, which is divided into separate “questions” and “answers” books. On the PEER VIII Web site, the reader is able to take a closed-book pretest before moving on to topic-specific quizzes. Each quiz is a collection of between 10 and 30 questions from the PEER VIII question bank so that when the reader has completed all of the topic-specific quizzes, each of the 450 questions has been answered. To earn the available continuing medical education credits for the PEER VIII activity, the reader will then have to complete all 450 questions again in a random format. Although there is the option to print answer sheets and to take the test with the question and answer books, there is no way to submit these answers for CME. Also new to this edition is a fantastic subject index for the answers book and a “where’s that question about . . . ?” index for the questions book of PEER VIII.

There are some minor issues with PEER VIII. When the quizzes are completed online, the correct answer choice is highlighted, but the reader then has to find that question in the answers book to read the full explanation. However, the publisher has indicated this will be remedied for the digital and online PEER VIII edition that is planned for a mid-2012 release. Within this resource are questions that seem to test knowledge that is of marginal practical use for most practicing emergency physicians, on topics such as the physics behind a biphasic defibrillator or the precise name given to types of cognitive errors. Finally, there are a few questions that seem to have wrong answers, and although there is an “updates” tab with corrections on the book’s Web site, there is not yet an easy mechanism for readers to submit their own suggestions for corrections.

Overall, PEER VIII is still one of the most valuable resources for emergency medicine examination preparation. The question stems, visual stimuli, and answer explanations are all excellent simulation for whatever ABEM examination the reader is studying for.

Peter Moffett, MD
Department of Emergency Medicine
Carl R. Darnall Army Medical Center
Fort Hood, TX

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