

THE DIPLOMA IN ALLERGOLOGY – LEVELS OF COMPETENCE REQUIRED AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Robin J Green, PhD, FRCP

Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Sharon Kling, MB ChB, DCH (SA), FCPaed (SA), MMed(Paed), M Phil (Applied Ethics)

Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Tygerberg Children's Hospital and Stellenbosch University, Tygerberg, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This article describes the history of the Diploma in Allergy, provides an outline of the requirements and its purpose and discusses future developments.

INTRODUCTION

The Diploma in Allergology is a flagship diploma offered by the College of Family Physicians of the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA). The Allergy Society of South Africa (ALLSA) was instrumental in establishing the Diploma and creating the curriculum for the examination based on the UK document on 'Good Allergy Practice'. Members of the ALLSA Excom have guided the training process and the bi-annual examinations since its inception.

The Diploma is aimed at non-specialists or specialists with an interest in allergy. The standard of competence is set at the level at which a generalist can safely manage common allergy problems and know when to refer a patient to a specialist.

ALLSA has contributed to education and training for the Diploma through workshops held in conjunction with its annual congress, as well as by hosting allergy updates and master classes in major centres in South Africa. Some academic centres, notably the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at the University of Pretoria, have dedicated teaching programmes for prospective diplomates. Practical training is obtained through various academic centres and accredited private practitioners.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRANCE TO THE DIPLOMA IN ALLERGOLOGY

In order to enter the examination, the candidate has to have completed internship and served a further 6 months of supervised training at a teaching or CMSA-approved hospital, and submitted a fully completed logbook to the CMSA. Basic knowledge for the diploma is outlined in the World Allergy Organization (WAO) position paper for the training of medical students in allergology (which is reprinted in this issue of *Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology*) and on that basic knowledge, candidates should build up practical experience and clinical exposure in preparing for the examination.

The logbook has been revised to make the requirements easier to achieve by generalists. The following is required:

- Total points 300 (down from previous 1 000)
- Clinical supervised training – minimum 100 points (20 hours)
- Lung functions – 5, skin-prick tests – 5, immunotherapy administration – 5 (5 points per procedure)
- Theoretical education/training – minimum 100 points (20 hours)
- Unsupervised training – maximum 50 points

Syllabus

Table I. Syllabus for the examination*

- 1.0 Human anatomy, physiology and immunology, considered in relation to allergology
- 2.0 Knowledge of common allergens and aerobiology
- 3.0 The pharmacology of drugs that may be used for treating allergic problems, including their mechanisms of action and potential drug interactions. Knowledge of immunotherapy is also required.
- 4.0 The candidate will be required to have a working knowledge of the diagnosis, treatment and management of the common as well as rarer diseases caused by allergy.
- 5.0 The candidate will be expected to have a working knowledge of the various diagnostic modalities utilised in allergology.
- 6.0 The candidate will be expected to have a working knowledge of basic epidemiology in relation to allergology.

* For a full list of topics that are required please visit the website at: <http://www.collegemedsa.ac.za/>

Table I lists the syllabus for the examination. A review of questions set in past examination papers is detailed in Table II. There is a component of 'basic science' questions and these contribute to the stature of this examination. This is being modified by removing the section on basic 'anatomy and physiology' (indicated in red type) to be more relevant. However, all the other contents are appropriate. This analysis is based on written long and short questions and some additional aspects may be included in multiple choice questions.

The logbook candidates are required to complete is shown at the end of the article.

Examinations

The first paper was set and written in April 2001. It has been written twice annually since then (we are now approaching our 15th examination). The paper currently consists of three 3-hour papers (Paper I – objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), Paper II – 4 long questions; Paper III – 8 short questions and 20 multiple-choice questions (MCQs)). A candidate achieving an overall pass for the written papers is invited to the clinical examination. The clinical examination consists of 2 long cases (1 adult and 1 child). The oral has not been part of the examination since May 2010.

Table II. Analysis of past papers

	Definitions	Aetiology	Pathophys.	Anatomy	Clinical	Diagnosis	Treatment	Pt ed	Total
Atopy	15	25	65		45	50			200
Asthma			10	15	20	90	5		140
Allergic rhinitis						25		10	35
Eczema		5	10	10	5	15			45
Urticaria		5	8	20	48	14			95
Food allergy			25	50	55	45	10		185
Drug allergy		5	10	20	60	25			120
Occupational allergy (including latex allergy)		20		10	65	50			1 4 5
Aerobiology	5	10		5	20	20			6 0
Ocular allergy									
Anaphylaxis			10	5	5	100			120
Miscellaneous					10	135			145
Angio-oedema	10				25	40			75
Total	30	70	138	135	358	609	15	10	

Diplomates

Thirty-eight candidates have written the examination and 36 individuals have been awarded the Diploma in Allergology (College of Family Physicians of the CMSA) (Table III). The majority of the diplomates are paediatricians, despite the examination being aimed at non-specialists. Figure 1 shows a group of diplomates and examiners.



Fig. 1. Examiners and candidates after a successful Diploma Allergology examination.

The Colleges of Medicine, in conjunction with input from the examiners and convener, award an annual medal for the candidate with the best performance in each year, provided the performance is regarded as outstanding. This medal was sponsored by ALLSA to honour one of our founders and a person widely regarded as the father of allergy in South Africa, Prof Eugene Weinberg, and is named the Eugene Weinberg Medal. The following outstanding candidates have been recipients of this prestigious medal (Table IV):

THE FUTURE FOR THE DIPLOMA IN ALLERGOLOGY

So what does the future hold for the Diploma in Allergology? Firstly, the time has arrived to create fellowship training in allergology to recognise a sub speciality in this discipline. This issue of *Current Allergy & Clinical Immunology* contains an article describing success in that area. We believe that this Certificate in Allergology will not compete with the Diploma, which will remain the mainstay of training for generalists. There is still a need to obtain additional postgraduate training in allergy by the vast majority of South African practitioners who are not specialists. We see the Diploma continuing to thrive alongside sub specialisation.

Table III. List of successful diplomates

2003	Dr George du Toit, Dr Adrian Morris, Dr Gloria Davis, Dr Gustav Joyce, Dr Ahmed Manjra, Dr Corli Gravett, Dr Heinrich Weber
2004	Dr Mohamed Essop, Dr Marinda Mc Donald, Dr Mike Levin, Dr Robin Green
2005	Dr Sam Risenga, Dr Fred Mokgoadi
2006	Dr Marlene Engelbrecht, Dr Refiloe Masekela, Dr Tammy Urquhart, Dr Shirani Naidoo, Dr Nelindra Chetty
2007	Dr Alta Terblanche, Dr Marilee Kriel, Dr Carien Murray, Dr Teshni Moodley, Dr Omolemo Kitchin, Dr Nandi Bhagwan
2008	Dr Sarah Karabus, Dr Nicholette du Plessis, Dr Theresa Coertzer
2009	Dr Chris Oettle, Dr Roshni Mistry, Dr Annemarie Gouws
2010	Dr Carla Els, Dr Debbie White, Dr Razia Alli, Dr Greg Lamb, Dr Marian Kwofie-Mensah, Dr Hellen Aanyu-Tukamuhebwa

Dr Ahmed Manjra, Prof Robin Green, Dr Gloria Davis and Dr Mike Levin, some of the original Diplomates, have been examining for some time, and some of our more recent Diploma alumni, Dr Tammy Urquhart, Prof Refiloe Masekela, Dr Omolemo Kitchin and Dr Nelindra Chetty, have also been roped in to examine.

However, we do believe the time has arrived to make the Diploma in Allergology the springboard to greater involvement in the practice and teaching of allergology. Diplomates need to be encouraged to contribute to the Allergy Society and its various activities, including continuing medical education (CME), articles for this journal, case-study reports and participation in examinations and congresses. We encourage diplomates to join ALLSA and get involved. We also see the time as ripe for an alumni process and activity. ALLSA can provide greater support to alumni and the present Excom are investigating such strategies.

Table IV. The Eugene Weinberg Medalists

2003	Dr Ahmed Manjra
2006	Dr Tammy Urquhart
2007	Dr Teshni Moodley
2009	Dr Annemarie Gouws
2010	Dr Debbie White

CONCLUSION

The Diploma in Allergology is an examination hosted by the CMSA but should be considered as an important resource of ALLSA. The examination has been made more accessible and appropriate for the South African generalist, and should therefore contribute to improved

patient care throughout South Africa. This Diploma should receive the ongoing attention of ALLSA, even when a fellowship in allergology is offered.

Declaration of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Logbook for Dip Allerg (SA)

TOTAL POINTS = 300

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:

TEL. NO: WORK:

TEL. NO: HOME:.....

HPCSA REG NO:

A. PRACTICAL TRAINING (Minimum 100 points, maximum 125 points)

Record supervised training at a College-accredited unit or practice. A minimum of 100 points is required at 5 points per hour. The maximum amount of points that may be claimed is 125. Unsupervised training may be claimed by affidavit at 1 point per hour up to a maximum of 50 points.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS DURING PRACTICAL TRAINING: 5 lung functions observed and interpreted; 5 skin-prick tests done and interpreted; 5 immunotherapy observed/administered. 5 Points per procedure.

CLINICAL

INSTITUTION	DATE	NO. HOURS	POINTS	SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE/NAME	CANDIDATE SIGNATURE
SUB TOTAL					

LUNG FUNCTION TESTING

NO.	INSTITUTION	DATE	SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE/NAME	CANDIDATE SIGNATURE
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

SKIN-PRICK TESTING

NO.	INSTITUTION	DATE	SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE/NAME	CANDIDATE SIGNATURE
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

IMMUNOTHERAPY

NO.	INSTITUTION	TYPE	DATE	SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE/NAME	CANDIDATE SIGNATURE
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

UNSUPERVISED PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE (Cross out unutilised rows)

DATE	PLACE	HOURS	SIGNATURE
SUB TOTAL			

B. THEORETICAL EDUCATION/TRAINING (Minimum 100 points) (20 hours)

Congresses, postgraduate courses, CME meetings, journal club attendance: 5 points per hour.

Presentations at congresses and writing journal articles: 20 points per presentation or article.

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	DATE	PLACE	ORGANISING BODY	NAME & SIGNATURE OF REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZING	HOURS	CREDITS OF BODY
SUB-TOTAL						
TOTAL A+B						