

**An interview with PACES examiner Dr Sarah Misbah El-Sadig,
Soba University Hospital, Khartoum, Sudan**



MRCP(UK) aims to make all its examinations accessible to trainee physicians, wherever in the world they live and work. One of the highlights of 2012 was the launch of a new PACES centre at Soba University Hospital in Khartoum, Sudan. The examination has run there twice now, with 88 candidates participating. In this interview, PACES examiner Dr Sarah Misbah El-Sadig explains what it takes to make it all happen, and why it's an important achievement for her trainees and her country.

Dr Misbah El-Sadig, what keeps you busy when you are not working on PACES?

I'm a consultant neurologist at Soba University Hospital and a member of the faculty of medicine at the University of Khartoum. This is where I studied medicine and I am proud to have two daughters who are following in my footsteps at the University. I also work as a volunteer physician at the Khartoum Cheshire Home for disabled children. My father received an MBE for his work for the charity and I am proud of him, too!

What inspired you to become a PACES examiner?

I was inspired by the benefits for our trainees, and my firm belief in the excellence of British medical training and practice. For young physicians living here, there are so many barriers to sitting the MRCP(UK) examinations in Britain. It is far from home, there are visas and travel to arrange, and the costs really add up. I want our trainees to have the experience of PACES – which assesses their capabilities from all angles and is a sound measurement of whether they will be good doctors – here in Sudan. This is because PACES reflects all that is best in British medicine. I know something about this, because I was a registrar in the UK and worked my way up to become a consultant at the Calderdale Royal Infirmary in Yorkshire, where I stayed for several years. British doctors are very adapted to history-taking and they have strong bedside skills. They don't rush to order an MRI scan without talking to the patient first and building that all-important bond.

What was your own experience like behind the scenes, organising the first examination in Khartoum?

It was really, really hard work! The biggest challenge was finding 80 patients for examination days, each diet. They had to be new cases, unseen before by the candidates. I travelled around three provinces in my Toyota pick-up truck to recruit them ahead of time. We had to work out all the logistics for the patients: transport, accommodation, medical and nursing care, medications

and catering. It was a big responsibility to make sure that the patients were all safe, comfortable and well cared for, and I had a great team to help with this, whom I can't thank enough.

One of my responsibilities was to take care of the examination venue, making sure that it was clean, welcoming and bright, ensuring that the air-conditioning was running, the toilets were clean, and checking on the menu for our examiners, and that the coffee lady had everything she needed. I even designed the PACES poster with its rosy colour. And of course I had to focus on being an examiner, and examining, and doing a good job for the candidates on their important day.

What are the main benefits of hosting PACES at your hospital?

It's very important for the trainees because it brings this opportunity close to home. Not so long ago, when we listened to our teachers talking about the examination, it sounded like going to the moon – it seemed that unreachable to us. I think it is overdue recognition for Sudan, for our people and for the excellence of our country's medical tradition. It's also recognition for our teachers, and we want to make them proud by being among the best PACES centres anywhere in the world.

I greatly appreciate the devotion, commitment, dedication and passion of Dr Osheik Seidi, the host examiner at our centre. Dr Seidi and the rest of the team played a major role in making PACES Sudan successful.

Great thanks also to my team, Dr Zeinab Hwaytallah, Dr Asim Almamoun, Dr Waail Gurafi, and Dr Fatma Shakak.