



## DR. ZESHAN QURESHI: A SOUTHAMPTON SUCCESS STORY

By Emily Mayo

Southampton's not of course short on heroes, and Dr Zeshan Qureshi is a prime example. He works as an Academic Paediatrician at Great Ormond Street and The Institute of Child Health in London. He's three years out of medical school, and it's hard not to be impressed by his growing rack of achievements.

Something that may not surprise many medical students is the outstanding success of his book, *The Unofficial Guide to Passing OSCEs*. The third edition sold over 5000 copies last year in 26 different countries from Malta to Malaysia in just a year. Though sales are 'seasonal', it notched up 5 months as Amazon's number one best selling medical book – and as the OSCE season resumes, it's back up there again today. And you just thought it was a local perk. Many of you already know it's one of the more readable, concise and eminently *useful* textbooks on the shelf.

But Amazon's aren't the only impressive statistics about *The Unofficial Guide*. It continues to raise a substantial amount for various charities including Dreamflight, Shello Orphanage Foundation and Bluebell Wood – each carefully selected for their transparent finances. And Dr Qureshi now has over 100 people working on the books – from marketing directors to graphic designers to doctors to medical students. Actually, this is one of his proudest achievements – making the book into a working educational project, continually built on by suggestions and contributions by those directly benefiting.

Zeshan is a really chilled guy to speak to. But this relaxed demeanour hides his clearly meticulous approach to study. He tells me his aim is to get down to four hours sleep each night (apparently I was doing him a favour keeping him awake), and he already has working projects on the go for multiple further books in various areas including obstetrics and gynaecology, cardiology, radiology, research and paediatrics (the list goes on). He's also a keen tennis player and enjoys travelling – so far having been to 45 countries across five continents.

Something that really stood out from our short conversation together was his passion for initiative. His opening gambit went straight to the point. Don't *hope* to get something published, *get* it published, he said. This followed with lots of practical advice for students wanting to get ahead in the medical paper chase game. The first thing to consider is time – your biggest limitation.

Efficiency is key – don't just tag behind consultants hoping to be thrown something which might just bag a journal spot, one day. Come up with the ideas yourself; then ask consultants to help you, rather

the other way round. For instance, on a neuro attachment, he suggests putting a review article together on (for example) a new Parkinson's drug – and then asking a neurologist to read over it and help you. Avoid ending up as a dogsbody in a project for someone which is going nowhere.

Zeshan himself made excellent use of time during his medical degree. Having won an £8000 research grant from Heart Research UK, his work in cardiology with Professor Nick Curzen led to international prizes, eleven publications, research presentations and teaching experience in six countries. And yet when I asked him what he got up to during his BSc year, his account centred around the night-based exploits in Southampton, travelling adventures and general character-building social opportunities that fourth year provides (I can back this claim). Is this selective memory? No, he insists – he just picked his projects wisely. That is, he was proactive about getting things done, and astute in his choices. And it worked. He certainly worked hard, but while other people did work longer hours across the week gaining expertise on lab techniques, he focused on analysing data already there, notching up four papers. And being picky is a skill he still considers worth cultivating. He continues to turn down requests he doesn't consider worth his time. Everyone will be different in their career ambitions, and will look to develop different skills (if lab work is your niche, then go for it), but he advises thinking critically about who you work with and what your time constraints, and how to achieve your agenda.

Our conversation is now drawing to an end and his final comments include an open and warm welcome to anyone interested in working with him on future books. He's not looking for vast experience or professional expertise, just people who are reliable and hard-working. Two students who have offered help have now gone on to become editors whilst still students – so it's an offer not to be ignored lightly. If you don't think it's for you, think about where else your niche lies. Don't hope for things to happen – make them happen.

Check out his Facebook page for continually updated revision tips and resources: [www.facebook.com/TheUnofficialGuideToMedicine](http://www.facebook.com/TheUnofficialGuideToMedicine).

You can get *The Unofficial Guide to Passing OSCEs*, along with the companion book containing mark schemes and practise stations, from Lizzie Casselden ([lizziecasselden@gmail.com](mailto:lizziecasselden@gmail.com)) or online.

