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Why did you want to go to Liverpool Pathology 2023?

I was especially keen to attend as an opportunity to meet other trainee pathologists from around the country! Due to covid, all our ST1 teaching weeks were virtual, and I have not met many other people from outside my deanery. I also thought that the programme of talks looked brilliant.

Do you feel more confident in your clinical practice following attendance at the Liverpool Pathology 2023?

If anything, I feel less confident! Most of the pathology lectures I've attended so far in my training have been aimed at trainees, and involved learning the rules of classification and most common features of each entity. Many of the talks I attended during the conference were spent bashing down the classifications, discussing tricky cases that defied the usual rules. I think it helped me to be more aware that not every neoplasm has read the WHO blue book, and that you shouldn't rely on a single test to make a diagnosis.

Highlight aspects of what you have learnt from the Liverpool Pathology 2023 which you were not aware of prior to the day.

There was a fascinating talk from Dr Caroline Young about the microbiome and its role in colorectal cancer. I was really interested to hear about the challenge of trying to tease out whether certain differences in the microbiome are a cause or an effect of the cancer. Another highlight for me was the lecture from Professor Daniel Berney about prostate cancer, accompanied by paintings of Dante's divine comedy. It was interesting to be shown a bird's eye view of an entire field, highlighting the challenges and successes, and the future direction. As a trainee learning pathology from scratch, it can be easy to forget what a dynamic field we are working in, and how much has changed over the past few decades!

Are there any aspects of what you have learnt during Liverpool Pathology 2023 that you would consider incorporating into your own practice or have already incorporated into practice?

During the trainee soft tissue symposium Dr Fernanda Amary gave a very dynamic talk about spindle cell neoplasms. It was really useful to listen to her approach as a specialist soft tissue pathologist, for every case systematically asking herself "Could this be reactive?", "Could this be benign?", and "Could this be a non-mesenchymal malignancy?", before only then moving on to "Could this be a sarcoma?", which are much rarer. She also emphasized the importance of careful low power assessment and cellular morphology – I think with soft tissue pathology it's easy to see spindle cells, panic, and just request 20 immunos straight off the bat. I'll definitely try to use Dr Amary's approach when assessing soft tissue cases in the future.

Did Liverpool Pathology 2023 meet your expectations?

Yes. I was also pleasantly surprised by the mixture of research and educational talks – I was probably expecting mostly research, but I think the more practical talks were fantastic, and it was brilliant to have both.

Finally, would you recommend it to your colleagues?

Absolutely! I am already looking forward to next year, and will try to persuade lots of the other trainees to join me. Many thanks to the BDIAP for their generous support!