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Place of work: Royal Marsden Hospital (current) but was working at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust at the time of attending the conference

Trainee grade: ST5 (current), ST4 at the time of conference attendance

It was an absolute pleasure and delight to attend the first virtual Manchester Pathology conference. I have had the opportunity to attend previous Joint Meetings of the BDIAP and The Pathological Society in person in the past. And this meeting despite being virtual, lived up to the same standards. The bursary provided me with the opportunity to listen to world experts from the comforts of my home.

There was a strong emphasis on screening, prevention and early detection of various cancers which was definitely a welcome extension of our roles as not just diagnosticians. I think one of the highlights of the conference was the perfect conglomeration of world experts and upcoming researchers. I was particularly amazed by the altruism of some of the researchers who shared their unpublished yet groundbreaking works for the benefit of the audience.

There was an ode to the history as well; be it the talk by Dr Neil Ryan or the BDIAP Kristin Henry Lecture by Dr Nafisa Wilkinson. It was quite humbling to listen to the journey of MMR testing from research to its now clinical application by Dr Ryan. Moreover, the glimpse into the history of mesenchymal tumors of the gynaecological tract by Dr Wilkinson definitely helped improved my understanding of how entities and terminologies evolved and came into existence. The talk by Prof Edward Odell definitely honed in the fact that when it comes to HPV associated dysplasia in the oral cavity, don't grade it.

I particularly found the talk on liquid biopsies fascinating and of its potential role in diagnosis, long term follow up and early disease recurrence detection, metastasis prognostication, detection of residual disease and development of resistance.

The bursary provided me with the opportunity to present two of my research works and the valuable questions from the audience and feedback from the moderators definitely provided food for thought and a future direction. Moreover, I was able to participate and win one of the prizes in the Trainee quiz competition.

Although I missed interacting with colleagues and researchers in person, the virtual format allowed me the flexibility to attend it from my home without worrying about arranging childcare. Moreover, the virtual meeting rooms provided me the opportunity to interact with colleagues virtually. The virtual daily scoring system to see how many talks you were able to attend with additional points for asking questions definitely brought the competitive side out of us. The AV system and the organisers definitely deserve a round of applause that despite the scale and the duration of the conference there were very few technical glitches. I am sure it was predominantly the virtual format which allowed participants and presenters to join in from across the globe. But the biggest advantage of the virtual format was the later accessibility to the talks which meant I could always go back and listen to some of the other sessions in instances when two of the simultaneous sessions attracted my attention.

It is always a delight to attend the Joint Meetings of the BDIAP and The Pathological Society. The level of research, the quality of talks, the trainee sessions are valuable and at par with any reputable international conferences. I would highly recommend it to my fellow trainees and early career pathologists in addition to the pathologists in general and utilise this opportunity to present their works.