

BDIAP report

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I was delighted to be awarded a British Division of the International Academy of Pathology (BDIAP) bursary to attend the Manchester Pathology 2021 Joint Meeting hosted by the BDIAP and the Pathological Society. The conference was hosted virtually in July 2021.

The conference gave me the opportunity to present a case report I worked on with neuropathologists in Cambridge (Dr Mayen Briggs and Kieren Allinson). We presented a case of fatal heroin-associated leukoencephalopathy in a young male with a history of substance abuse and described the associated neuropathological findings. Heroin-associated leukoencephalopathy is a rare neurological complication of heroin abuse associated with inhalation of heroin fumes. It is typically characterised by a progressive encephalopathy developing over weeks to months but cases of abrupt onset are rarely described. The pathogenesis is poorly understood and the diagnosis can be challenging. Specifically, we showed the presence of axonal sparing in our case suggesting a demyelinating rather than hypoxic process as central to the pathogenesis of acute heroin-induced leukoencephalopathy. The presentation generated an interesting discussion; with probing questions posed by histopathologists and basic scientists alike! Being challenged on the wider context and implications of my research galvanized me to ensure I was well versed on the pre-existing relevant literature. Professor Coupland and Dr Petts were excellent chairs who facilitated an in-depth Q&A session following the poster presentations.

As well as presenting my case report, I had the opportunity to attend a range of sessions relevant to both my general histopathology training and sub-specialty interest in neuropathology. The inclusion of sessions relating to recent advances in histopathology was a particular highlight; for example, relating to digital pathology, AI powered digital diagnostics, and advances in precision oncology. Others sessions relating more closely to the 'day to day' work of a histopathologist, for example concerning liquid biopsies and electron microscopy, will prove a useful adjunct to my training. The virtual format of the conference allowed for ease of transfer between different 'rooms', maximizing time used listening to the speakers. The face-to-face interaction with fellow histopathologists, however, was missed, and I look forward to the next in person BDIAP event.