

Last Summer I was fortunate to receive a bursary to help support an elective in pathology. This proved to be a fantastic opportunity for me to learn more about the career and to clarify some misconceptions I had held about the career. I am proud to report that the elective has since proven to be a hugely valuable experience and has left me eager to pursue a career in pathology.

My six-week elective was comprised of two three-week spells, the first of which was at the Quadram Institute, where I continued work on a microbiology project. Under Dr. Mark Webber's supervision, I continued with a study which formed the basis of my MRes, and investigated anti-septic resistance in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

The second half of my elective was undertaken at the Cotman Centre. Here I received an excellent introduction to some of the many elements of pathology; including histopathology, cytology, immunohistochemistry and post-mortems. My time at the Cotman Centre was very kindly facilitated by Dr. Joseph Murphy, who had arranged a timetable for me to shadow GI, urological, breast and dermatopathologists, providing me with an overview of some of the many facets of pathology.

Prior to this placement, I felt my exposure to histopathology at medical school had left me uncertain of the role a pathologist played, and consequently I had been unable to commit to pursuing a career in pathology. By shadowing pathologists and attending post-mortems, cut-up sessions and multi-disciplinary meetings, this placement afforded me a better understanding of what a career in pathology would entail.

I particularly enjoyed the collaborative nature of the pathologist's occupation, and the central role they played within the MDT. I had formerly held the ill-conceived notion that pathology might have been a solitary profession, but I was glad to see that this was not at all the case. It was good to observe the role senior doctors played in training and education. This was important to me, as I have hugely enjoyed teaching anatomy and problem-based learning at medical school, and the prospect of continuing to teach is greatly appealing to me.

Perhaps the most valuable element of the placement was the opportunity to receive guidance and advice from trainees and seniors alike. The trainees particularly were very candid (and overwhelmingly positive!) in their description of what training is like, and they were keen to provide valuable career advice. Over the duration of the placement I also had the opportunity to contribute to an audit looking at the diagnosis of breast lesions of uncertain malignant potential (B3). This was a fantastic chance to gain further experience of conducting clinical audits; a skill that will be of great use throughout my career.

The elective was a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience and I would recommend it to all medical students, irrespective of whether they are currently considering a career in pathology. It highlighted to me some of the many attractions of a career in pathology and has left me with a renewed eagerness to pursue a field of medicine that I otherwise had not been exposed to.

I remain thankful to the BDIAP and its members for their generosity, as well as Dr. Joseph Murphy who proved to be a keen educator and an encouraging role model.