

## **BDIAP Elective Report 2025**

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***Elective completed at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, USA***



I spent 3 weeks at Children's Hospital Los Angeles in California undertaking an elective observership in the Paediatric Pathology Department under the supervision of Dr Nick Shillingford, an Attending Pathologist. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience, which would not have been possible without the support of the BDIAP and the elective bursary which they provided for me. My time in the department was focussed entirely on histopathology as opposed to clinical pathology or laboratory medicine. My role during this elective was as an observer, trying to experience as many facets of hospital pathology as possible and following the activities of the Resident and Fellow Doctors. As I was based at a children's hospital, I was able to gain subspecialist exposure to paediatric pathology. My aim in completing this elective was to complement my desire to pursue histopathology specialty training in the future. I wanted to better understand what the day to day duties of a pathologist are, as well as build on my foundational knowledge of histology and diagnosis and gain some experience. Doing this in the US has given me insight into a different healthcare system and allowed me to see some cutting-edge work at a large specialist centre.

My role involved reviewing daily cases alongside the resident doctor. We would examine the slides, discussing the visual features together and the resident would explain their approach in working towards a diagnosis. It was very educational for me to make my own attempt at describing components of the slide such as architecture, cell types and signs of malignancy. Following this, I would sit down alongside the resident and my supervisor to discuss and sign off the slides which we had reviewed that day. It was very helpful for me to see the thought process and further investigation employed by the attending to reach a diagnosis and to learn from their wealth of experience. My knowledge was further developed through attending MDT meetings, grand rounds and lectures which truly opened me up to rare conditions, evolving techniques and workflows.

At this hospital, the work of pathologists was primarily based around glass slides, with minimal digital pathology involvement in primary diagnostic work. I was able to practise using the microscope and work through slide sets myself. Furthermore, I was able to experience the on-site evaluation role of pathologists as they were called to determine diagnostic sample adequacy such as during thyroid fine needle aspiration. I found this work to be very exciting as it allowed the pathologist to make an impact in real time during a procedure. During my time there, I also had the opportunity to see the work of the Pathology Associates as they grossed

specimens and prepared slides. It was incredibly insightful to see this process and gain an appreciation of the complexity involved in producing reliable, useful and high yield histological slides. At this hospital, residents and fellows were sometimes involved in slide production, usually in the preparation of frozen sections.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this elective was the number of rare conditions and cases I was able to see, many of which I hadn't had any exposure to before. Some examples of uncommon cases I saw include odontogenic tumours, rhabdoid tumours and primary cardiac tumours. This was surprising to me as it went against my expectations of what the daily caseload would be. I believe that I was able to gain an appreciation of the nature of unique cases which present in paediatric pathology. This experience has strengthened my confidence in pursuing histopathology as a specialty. I was glad to see the variety involved in the day to day work, it was exciting and changed my perception that the work may be repetitive. I have also been surprised by the level of complexity there is in the pathological classification of conditions. Overall, this elective has significantly developed my knowledge of histology as well as the clinical practice of histopathology. I am very glad to have had the opportunity to spend time in California gaining these experiences and really enjoyed my elective. Thank you to the BDIAP for your support.