

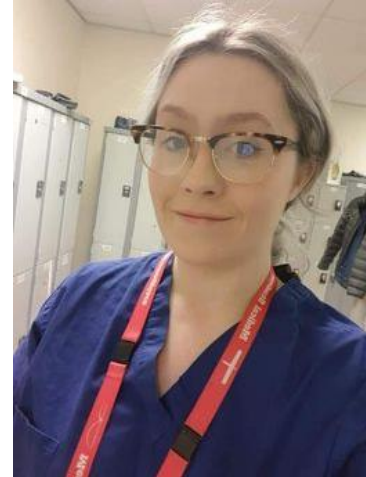
Emily Platten

Bursary year: 2019

Newcastle University

Histopathology at South Tees Hospital, UK

I am privileged to be the recipient of the BDIAP medical student elective bursary for the summer of 2019 and would like to thank all at the BDIAP for this honor and support. I am also grateful to my supervisor Dr Adrienne Mutton and the team at South Tees hospital for making me feel welcome and providing me with so many learning opportunities.



From the start of medical school, I had a strong inclination towards the anatomy aspects of teaching. I enjoyed learning about the human body through work with cadavers in the dissecting room, and consequently, I took a year out of formal study to assist with anatomy teaching at Durham University. During this time, I became more interested in a career in histopathology. My elective offered me the opportunity to spend more in depth time in Pathology and see aspects of Pathology that are not included in the medical training program.

I chose to stay in the North East of England for my elective rather than travel abroad for several reasons. Firstly, I feel I have not been exposed to much Pathology as opposed to other specialisms – so there is still much to learn here. Secondly, I hope to do my specialty training within the northern region, so this gave me a realistic insight into my potential working environment.

The overriding aim of my elective was to gain experience in pathology as a career and to improve my understanding of the specialism as a topic. I achieved this by attending different subspecialties and teaching sessions and through shadowing a specialist pathologist in his lab. Another aspect I was keen to clarify throughout my experience was how much pathology differs to a clinical specialist, and whether such differences are more suited to my future aspirations with regards to a career. I was able to gain insight in these areas by discussing the issue with various members of the team, to see the specificity of pathology from the standpoint of a medic (i.e. pathologist) and a biomedical scientist. I found this experience to be invaluable and very informative.

I attended over 40 post-mortems, typically starting my days at in the morgue. There, I would begin with helping the pathologist perform the external examination of the deceased. After the general exam, I would then attend the internal examinations where each organ is looked at in detail, which bore a lot of similarities to my dissection work at Durham University. During these sessions, the pathologist would teach me the art of the postmortem, anatomy and common findings in causes of death.

Another aspect I found useful was the microscopic examination of tissue. I would sit with the pathologist and explore samples using the joint microscope, and as a result, I can now identify various macroscopic signs related to causes of death. This is useful not only for my future career but has also helped me to better understand the pathophysiology of a few core conditions ready for the final year of medicine.

Lastly, I gained a lot from attending the various Multidisciplinary Team Meetings that were held across different departments during my placement. Prior to each MDT, I would review the cases and look at the slides and histology. The Pathologist would then go through these and provide teaching, which again has helped me build on my knowledge needed for stage five. I also liked the variety of MDTs.

Overall, this experience highlighted how diverse and varied histopathology is both as a specialism and a career. I found the full elective intellectually stimulating and feel this will enable me now as an FY1 doctor to give better explanations about conditions to patients and assist me in interpreting histology reports. I cannot wait to get more experience in the future and hopefully become a histopathologist trainee one day!