The Royal College of Pathologists
Pathology: the science behind the cure

Pathology Summer School 2024: inspiring tomorrow's pathologists

Students reflect on their time at this year's Summer School.

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We successfully hosted our annual Pathology Summer School on 8–9 August, welcoming 65 medical students from across the UK, to increase visibility of pathology among medical students.

This event provided a unique opportunity for students to explore the diverse career paths within pathology through interactive breakout sessions and informative lecture presentations.

Over the course of 2 days, students visited both the Royal College of Pathologists and the Gordon Museum of Pathology. They had the flexibility to tailor their experience to the pathology specialties of their interest. An evening BBQ encouraged networking, allowing students to connect with each other and engage in one-on-one conversations with consultants.

The feedback from the event has been overwhelmingly positive, underscoring the importance of early engagement with students in their educational journey. Some of our students have written about their experience below.

We extend our gratitude to our sponsors: the British Division of the International Academy of Pathology, the Pathological Society, the British Society for Haematology, the Association of Clinical Pathologists, the British Infection Association and the British Neuropathological Society.

Surpassing expectations

“The Summer School surpassed any expectations I had; it was arranged and executed extraordinarily well. On the first day, I took part in talks that progressively built on one another and gave me a comprehensive overview of the practice of pathology in the UK. The breakout sessions, which delved deeper into the pathology specialties, were interactive and problem-solving in nature. Pathology truly does make you feel like a medical detective.

On the second day, exploring King’s College’s Gordon Museum of Pathology was a fascinating experience where I could spend 20 minutes intrigued by a single specimen. I felt truly privileged to be there.

A highlight for me was socialising and reflecting with new friends over the best barbeque I've ever had.

One of the standout aspects across both days was the sheer joy and interest each speaker had around their specialty. They often had winding careers that finally led them to what they loved: pathology.

Having no prior interest or knowledge in pathology as a medical specialty, I was pleasantly surprised by how interested I suddenly became once the Summer School was over. Pathology is a weirdly attractive specialty and I'm grateful the Summer School has helped me realise this. Thank you RCPath!

– Tony Alocious, Second Year Medical Student at Imperial College London

Infectious enthusiasm

“The Summer School was a unique and valuable opportunity that I wish was available for every medical specialty. I found that having the information delivered on each of the pathology specialties from the experts themselves was very engaging, and learning about current scientific advances encouraged me to do more research out of curiosity.

My favourite session was the haematology breakout, where we practiced blood typing, mock bone marrow aspiration and blood disorder diagnosis from example cases. This exposed me to the range of roles haematology has to offer and the interesting basic science behind it, and since then I've taken up other opportunities related to the field.

I also enjoyed hearing about the careers of various pathologists directly from them, and how they got involved in other things like research, public engagement and voluntary work. They had an infectious enthusiasm when talking about their specialty which meant that they were keen to give advice and answer questions, but also generally encouraged me to be positive about the future.

After attending this Summer School, I feel more informed and guided, career-wise, and better connected since I met lots of other friendly students as well, which made the experience twice as enjoyable.

– Emmanuel Ogunsakin, First Year Student at University of Southampton

A fantastic opportunity

“I've always been interested in pathology, so when I first heard about the RCPath Summer School, I just had to attend. The first day started with various lectures and breakout sessions involving some of the many specialties of pathology, like neuropathology and microbiology. With free lunch and accommodation sorted by the College, the day ended with a BBQ full of opportunities to network with the lecturing doctors and other attendees. This allowed for some great conversations with pathologists who gave fantastic tips on how to get started in their respective specialties. The wine wasn't too bad either!

The next day ran in a similar manner – all within the Gordon Museum of Pathology in King's College London. It contains a large collection of pathology samples, from molar pregnancies to gunshot injuries, polycystic kidneys and lungs with asbestosis. As medical students, we rarely have access to such a wealth of information.

Whether you have no interest in pathology or have decided that it is the career for you, this Summer School is a fantastic opportunity to explore a diverse subject that is often covered in little detail. You simply have to attend to see for yourself!
– Callista Middleton (Second Year Student at Queen's University, Belfast)

Fascinating insights

“The RCPath Pathology Summer School 2024 has truly been an outstanding experience. This event offered medical students an exciting opportunity to gain a deeper insight into various elements of pathology, through lectures as well as group breakout and workshop sessions.

It was incredibly inspiring to learn from the experiences of pathologists and hear how they embarked on a career in pathology and the journeys they took to specialise in this remarkable field. In addition to lectures, the breakout sessions and workshops offered fascinating insights into the various, flexible pathology training pathways and highlighted examples of cases that can arise in the day-to-day work of neuropathologists, haematologists, histopathologists, microbiologists, immunologists, clinical biochemists and chemical pathologists.

During the breakout sessions, we were able to further explore and learn from the wide range of pathology specimens present in the Gordon Museum of Pathology.

Moreover, the Summer School was a great opportunity to meet medical students from all over the country, who shared a similar genuine passion and curiosity for pathology. We even engaged in interesting conversations about the intricacies of disease and recent advances in pathology with pathologists, over a fun evening barbecue.

Thank you so much to the Royal College of Pathologists for planning, organising and delivering this unique, amazing and memorable Summer School experience!

– Shreya Kantamneni, Second Year Medical Student, UCL

Meet the author

KRISTEN PONTELLO

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