

NIHR/BAD Research Taster Report

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Background and Aims

I am currently a Core Medical Trainee wanting to pursue a career in Dermatology. I wanted to learn more about dermatology research as I am drawn to the stimulating, varied and diverse career that it has to offer.

I applied for this Bursary to enable me to go to a world-class centre of excellence: St John's Institute of Dermatology, in London. My aims were to sample the breadth of dermatology research undertaken at the institute; to learn exactly what a career in dermatology research involves; to get involved with laboratory work and learn some key skills and techniques; to speak with consultants, researchers and academics to learn about different career options and ultimately to help me to decide if I want to pursue an academic career.

My Experience

I commenced my week by meeting with Professor Barker who had kindly supported my application for the Research Taster Bursary. I was given a detailed and well thought-out itinerary which brought me into contact with most of the people at the Institute.

Throughout the week I met and had discussions with all of the Research Group Leads, PhD students, clinicians and laboratory technicians. I learnt about the specific research projects that each of the Groups were involved in as well as the current direction of travel of dermatology research. Speaking to this whole cross-section of people working in dermatology research was invaluable at allowing me to gain much greater insight into what a career in dermatology research involves.

I had sessions in the laboratory where I learnt basic techniques such as DNA extraction, cell culture, PCR, Western blotting and flow cytometry as well as monoclonal antibody production techniques. I spent time with many of the PhD students and learnt about their projects, theses and their day-to-day routines as well as short-term and longer-term career plans and aspirations.

As well as laboratory based research I learnt about the various clinical research that is being undertaken at St John's and I attended a clinic with clinical trial patients. I also went to St Thomas's Hospital and met with Dr Carsten Flohr where I learnt more about dermato-epidemiology research and paediatric dermatology.

I am hugely grateful to the NIHR and BAD for awarding me this Bursary and to all of those at St John's Institute of Dermatology, particularly Professor Barker. The opportunity to go to this world-leading research facility has been invaluable at showing me what a career in dermatology research has to offer. Speaking to such passionate, driven and welcoming people in this stimulating and collaborative environment has most definitely convinced me that I want to pursue a career in dermatology research.