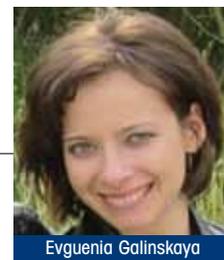


THESIS / BAD / BSID Research Course

Evguenia Galinskaya
Portsmouth



What is this course?

THESIS was formed in 1990 by Dr Clive Archer, to stimulate interest in research activities amongst young dermatologists. The course has since evolved into THESIS / BAD / BSID, and provides a forum for sharing experience and expertise with the aim to inspire current and future dermatologists to engage in meaningful research throughout their working lives.

Who is the course for?

The course is primarily aimed at dermatology registrars, although other doctors, including SHOs and Foundation trainees who would like to pursue a career in clinical or academic dermatology, are welcome.

Why did I attend?

I attended the course in June 2012 as a core medical trainee (CMT) with aspirations to pursue Dermatology as a career. During my Foundation and CMT training, I felt there was not much career guidance available on academic paths in dermatology. As I presented at the BAD *DermSchool* pre-Conference meeting, doctors in other specialties and medical students do not regard dermatology as a research-active specialty (1). I was seeking inspiration and evidence to dispel that myth.

The NIHR / BAD Research Taster Bursary 2010/11 enabled me to visit the Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology so I knew already there was more to research than a "wet bench". Nonetheless I wanted to hear from the experts what makes it worthwhile to grow cell lines or run clinical trials or focus on epidemiological studies.

What is the structure?

The course is delivered over two days and comprises of a series of presentations. No pre-course preparation is required. Throughout both days there are many opportunities for questions, feedback and networking. On the first day the session concluded just after 5pm and was followed by a Conference Dinner featuring Prof Robin Eady as the dinner speaker. On the second day, the meeting concluded before 4pm.

Where does it take place and how much does it cost?

This yearly course was held in a lecture

theatre at the British Association of Dermatologists' headquarters in London. The cost was £295 including handouts, refreshments, lunch on both days and accommodation for one night. There are several Educational Bursaries available to trainees to partly cover the cost of the course.

Highlights

Dr Ardern-Jones ensured a smooth running of the course over both days. Dr Ormerod talked about the highlights and challenges of clinical research giving practical advice on how to make a start and follow it through. Dr Carsten Flohr gave a fascinating insight into his work in Vietnam. I was particularly interested in learning more about epidemiological studies which focus on associations between risk factors and disease outcomes.

Prof Stephen Holgate explained how MRC funding works, while Dr James Fenton from the NIHR Trainees Coordinating Centre presented a simplified version of NIHR funding schemes relevant to dermatology research for junior and senior clinicians. They both gave tips for and dispelled some myths about applications for funding.

Several research fellows shared the highs and the lows of their projects. I remembered Dr Simpson's tips to aspiring researchers:

- Be prepared to be unprepared
- Believe in your project
- Stay motivated and persevere.

I learnt from Dr Jane Sterling that "compared to general clinical work, [in research] the highs are higher and the lows are lower". Her talk clarified the differences between various grant-making bodies and a PhD versus MD. Professor O'Toole presented on the subject of "Laboratory based research relevant to the clinic". She summarised the key skills and attitudes that should ensure success in basic research and grant applications. Dr John Ingram talked about his involvement with the UK DCTN and shared useful tips on how to clear the hurdles in getting your paper published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Professor Rustin reminded that "research is fundamental to the advancement of our specialty" and talked about various awards, scholarships and fellowships that facilitate this. Professor Nestle highlighted the importance of role models, diverse portfolios and collaboration in a setting of "a fast-moving and highly competitive field".

Dr Sara Brown touched upon bridging the gap between pure science and clinical work: "research activity will equip you with the skills and knowledge to be on the same wavelength with other clinicians who are in full-time research". The notion was echoed by Prof Arne Akbar (Division of Infection and Immunology, UCL) who advised "to be humble and learn basic skills from the scientists". His key for success was "enthusiasm, enthusiasm, enthusiasm".

Was it worth it?

This was a well organised course featuring a mix of inspirational speakers who shared personal experiences of the highs and the lows of research. There was a good opportunity to network with like-minded colleagues in a friendly informal atmosphere.

THESIS offers an excellent starting point for anyone considering a career in academic or a combined academic and clinical dermatology. It gives plenty of encouragement and practical advice on how to start today, on how to see it through and to make a difference along the way.

Further information

For information and to access the meeting registration form go to <http://www.bad.org.uk/site/691/default.aspx>.

References:

1. E Galinskaya. Eczema, Easy Life and Expensive Watches. Poster presented at: *DermSchool*, 89th Annual Meeting of the British Association of Dermatologists; 2009 Jun 7; SECC, Glasgow, UK.