

Taster Week Bursary: Caroline Allen

Professor O'Toole's laboratory at the Blizard Institute, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry

I spent a week at Professor O'Toole's laboratory at the Blizard Institute. The aim of the week was to gain experience of working in a research laboratory in dermatology, and to gain some experience of research techniques.

Much of my time was spent shadowing the post-doctoral scientists and PhD students in the laboratory. I gained some practical experience of laboratory techniques including tissue culture of keratinocytes, Western Blot, confocal microscopy and antibody staining.

I attended the weekly departmental seminar, during which a PhD student in another laboratory presented his work on senescence markers in BCC subtypes. It was very useful as a Dermatology SpR to see how the clinician scientists were able to ask pertinent questions that were not obvious to those without a clinical background.

I also had the opportunity to attend Professor O'Toole's group meeting. This was an excellent opportunity for me to gain an overview of the individual projects being undertaken in the laboratory and how these complemented one another. I was also able to learn about further molecular techniques being used in the laboratory such as the use of siRNA's.

I was able to attend series of lectures being given by the Academic Clinical Fellows from a wide range of disciplines organised by Professor O'Toole. I learned about the range of projects being undertaken by academic clinical fellows; I was also able to discuss the experiences of others undertaking academic work in parallel with clinical training, which provided useful insights.

I had a very useful and productive week; I would highly recommend a taster week to other Dermatology SpR's who are interested in undertaking further research.