

Working life (clinical genetics)

This page provides useful information about the roles and responsibilities of clinical geneticists, where they work, who they work with and what they feel about their role.

"I became a clinical geneticist because I had an interest and fascination for the rare syndromic disorders seen in paediatrics and adult medicine." - **Clinical geneticist**

How your time is spent

Specialists generally work in the UK network of 23 regional genetics [1] centres. Their work is mostly in clinic (outpatient-based) and ambulatory care settings but they also see ward referrals.

Clinical geneticists will see anyone referred to them with a genetic concern or condition. This will include patients of all ages with a whole host of conditions as well as screening of 'at risk' family members. On average, specialists will see between ten and 15 families a week, spread between two or three clinics.

Typically, the day will include a general genetic clinic or a specialist clinic such as a clinic for:

- cancer genetics [1]
- paediatric dysmorphology
- prenatal genetics [1]
- neurogenetics
- cardiac genetics [1]

Other activities to be fitted into the day include:

- preparing for clinics, eg doing literature searches
- following-up clinics, eg contact with laboratories to see where rare genetic tests can be carried out
- responding to requests, eg giving a diagnostic opinion on the neonatal [2] unit, paediatric or adult ward
- discussing cases, eg having a multidisciplinary team meeting (MDT) [3] to discuss family counselling and investigation
- MDTs with other medical specialties to discuss cases and genetic results
- participation in research studies
- teaching – clinical geneticists teach across the whole range of health care professionals

On-call and working hours

There is little or no out-of-hours or shift work in clinical genetics [1]. However, some clinical genetics [1] units organise an on-call rota, particularly for the diagnosis of neonates with abnormalities or prenatal cases. Just over 5% of consultants say they are routinely on-call at weekends.

Less than full-time working is common in this specialty with just over a half of women consultants in clinical genetics [1] doing so.

- Who you will work with? Expand / collapse

Clinical geneticists work alongside:

- genetic counsellors [4]
- clinical laboratory scientists and technicians
- medical secretaries and administrative staff

They also work closely with:

- GPs
- psychologists
- obstetricians
- paediatricians
- neurologists
- cardiologists
- oncologists

- Attractions and challenges of the role Expand / collapse

The excitement of making rare diagnoses is very rewarding but the range of patients and conditions seen is broad which can be challenging. It is also enjoyable keeping abreast of new diagnostic and molecular technological developments within the field and contributing to the medical literature.

Clinical geneticists, however, frequently have to give distressing news to patients, but patients and their families may be relieved to get an explanation after many years of investigation.

Clinical geneticists are also frequently involved in complex ethical and moral dilemmas related to genetic testing.

Clinical geneticists regularly lead or participate in a wide range of research projects including recruiting patients to large multicentre studies.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/clinical-genetics/working-life>

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Genetics>

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Neonatal>

[3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Multidisciplinary_team_meeting_MDT

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/life-sciences/genetic-counselling>