

Working life (ID)

This page provides useful information about the roles and responsibilities of specialists in infectious disease, where they work, who they work with and what they feel about their role.

“Although infectious diseases is a small specialty in comparison with other system-based disciplines, it provides the opportunity for a challenging and constantly varied career. Specialists deal with everything from diverse clinical management to intellectually stimulating frontier research into diseases of worldwide importance.”

- An infectious disease specialist

Infectious disease specialists work primarily in hospitals. They tend to work in large or specialist hospitals rather than smaller district general hospitals although many infectious diseases are also treated in the community.

How your time is spent

Daily activities include:

- admitting patients with severe infections
- managing severe infection in an intensive therapy unit (ITU) setting
- managing patients with imported infections such as malaria
- caring for immunocompromised patients, including neutropenic (low white-blood-cell count) patients and those with HIV infection/AIDS
- seeing patients in clinics dealing with a wide range of infection related problems including specialty clinics such as hepatitis, HIV, tuberculosis, travel related infection etc
- managing nosocomial infections (infections a patient acquires while in hospital), with knowledge of infection control and appropriate liaison with laboratory services
- providing advice to other consultants in all specialties about care of their patients with infections
- advising on policies relating to control of infections and best use of antibiotics
- advising on prevention of travel related infections

Sometimes patients must be isolated in order to be safely managed and treated.

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Who you will

work with?

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Specialists in infectious diseases work alongside:

- specialist nurses
- laboratory staff
- medical secretaries and administrative staff

They also work closely with:

- specialists in infection-related disciplines such as medical microbiology, virology, genitourinary medicine and public health
- specialists in many other disciplines of medicine and surgery

**Attractions and
challenges of
the role**

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Specialists working in infectious diseases enjoy the variety of work. It affects all systems of the body and patients often come from different countries and cultures.

Patients can often be cured but other diagnoses such as HIV involve forming long-term clinical relationships with patients to control their conditions. Ethical and difficult social issues are often dealt with. ID specialists work within a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) and become familiar with aspects of medicine others find daunting such as drug resistance, interactions and pharmacokinetics (how the body deals with a drug).

The specialty is always progressing, for example, new scientific advances in diagnostic technology and treatments provide the opportunity to continue to learn but also increase the challenge of keeping up-to-date with rapid change. Many specialists combine clinical and academic work to suit their interests.

Infectious diseases also offers opportunities for interesting work in different settings overseas.

Career structures in infectious diseases are less obvious than in some other specialties which put the emphasis on the individual to plan and manage their own progression.

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