

## Working life (nuclear medicine)

This page provides useful information on the working week as well as any on-call and other commitments, along with information on who you will work with. The attractions and challenges of the job are also in this section.

"Nuclear medicine offers the opportunity to do something fairly unique within the field of medicine. It is different from other medical specialties in that it is mainly an imaging specialty with a therapeutic aspect. It is however also very different to the anatomical imaging of radiology. I chose this specialty for a number of reasons. It provided me with a new challenge and educational opportunities including the MSc and research. The work/life balance was attractive and the training allows for the continued involvement and participation in general medicine." (ST7 trainee)

### How your time is spent

Specialists are based in hospital nuclear medicine departments, which house imaging devices, sample-counting equipment and possibly a radio-pharmacy for preparation of radio-pharmaceuticals.

Typical daily activities include:

- vetting of requests for diagnostic tests to ensure appropriateness
- performance of cardiac stress testing
- other medical interventions required for specific diagnostic tests
- checking nuclear medicine images for quality
- reporting nuclear medicine studies, including comparison with other imaging results
- attending multidisciplinary team meetings (MDTs)
- clinically evaluating patients undergoing radio-isotope therapy (to treat cancer) and subsequently following up of these procedures

Patients are mostly outpatients with a range of clinical problems including [cardiovascular](#) <sup>[1]</sup> disease, cancer, musculoskeletal problems and renal disease. Some inpatients have acute problems such as suspected [pulmonary embolism](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, gastrointestinal bleeding and infection. The number of patients seen in a day is highly variable, but perhaps 20-40 patients for diagnostic studies and five patients for therapy.

### [On call](#) <sup>[3]</sup> and working hours

Nuclear medicine departments are typically open during normal office hours (9am to 5pm),

although some departments offer a limited [on call](#) [3] service.

- Who you will work with? Expand / Collapse  
Doctors in nuclear medicine work alongside:

- technologists
- radiographers
- physicists
- radio-pharmacists
- nurses
- medical secretaries and administrative staff

Specialists also work closely with other hospital specialties and [primary care](#) [4] physicians.

- Attractions and challenges of the role Expand / Collapse  
One of the appeals of nuclear medicine is the clinical challenge. The work is varied and complex. It involves dealing with problems across multiple specialties and keeping up with scientific advances in diagnosis and therapy and bringing them into clinical practice. Having a significant impact on health outcomes for patients is also rewarding.

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#### Links

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

[2] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Pulmonary\\_embolism](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Pulmonary_embolism)

[3] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On\\_call](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call)

[4] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Primary\\_care](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Primary_care)