

Anatomical pathology

Anatomical pathology is the processing, examination, and diagnosis of surgical specimens in hospital and public mortuaries.

In the NHS, the healthcare science staff who work in hospital mortuaries are called anatomical pathology technologists (APTs). Outside the NHS, they also work in local authority public mortuaries.



A

Overview

Your role as an APT is varied and there are many different areas of expertise required. One of your main roles is to provide assistance to a pathologist ^[1] in conducting post mortems. This is a vital area of work as understanding the causes of death enables better understanding of the disease process and in some cases, when death is unexpected, the cause of death can have legal implications.

The extent of involvement and responsibility you'll have as an APT during the post mortem examination will increase as you gain skills and knowledge.

Understanding the causes of death enables better understanding of the disease process

Working life

As an APT, you'll:

- organise the day-to-day running of the mortuary facility (including administration and record keeping)
- take care of the personal belongings and effects of the deceased
- be responsible for recording samples, specimens and organs and for their appropriate disposal
- be responsible for the reconstruction of the deceased after examination
- liaise with a wide range of people
- provide advice regarding documentation and medico-legal issues
- maintain the mortuary and post mortem room
- ensure equipment and instruments are kept clean, sterile and ready for use
- take samples for clinical examination, transplant or research
- advise junior medical staff on post mortem procedures and examinations
- ensure legal documentation is dealt with correctly

Who would I work with?

As an APT, you'll liaise with a range of people including medical staff (for example pathologists ^[1] and general practitioners ^[2]), nursing ^[3] staff, the police, funeral directors, chaplains or spiritual care personnel ^[4] and the bereaved.

Want to learn more?

- Find out more about the entry requirements, skills and interests required to enter a career in anatomical pathology ^[5]
- Find out more about the training you'll receive for a career in anatomical pathology ^[6]
- Pay and conditions

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Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the [Agenda for Change \(AfC\)](#) [7] pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. As a trainee APT, you'd typically start on [AfC](#) [8] band 3, with posts at more senior levels being at bands 4 and 5.

Staff will usually work a standard 37.5 hours per week. They may work a shift pattern.

Terms and conditions of service can vary for employers outside the NHS.

- Where the role can lead

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Once qualified, many APTs undertake further study leading to higher qualifications currently awarded by the [Royal Society of Public Health](#) [9], and many continue their careers into advanced technical work or mortuary management. A BSc in Anatomical Pathology Technology is currently under development.

- Job market and vacancies

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Labour market

According to the [Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology](#) [10], there are approximately 700 APT positions across the UK. The Association also estimates that only 15-20 training positions become available each year.

Finding and applying for jobs

When you're looking for job or apprenticeship vacancies, there are a number of sources you can use, depending on the type of work you're seeking.

It can be advantageous if you've gained some experience of working in a relevant environment (such as a laboratory or with an undertaker or funeral director) before applying for a job vacancy.

Check vacancies carefully to be sure you can meet the requirements of the person specification before applying and to find out what the application process is. You may need to apply online or send a C.V. for example.

Key sources relevant to vacancies in the health sector:

- Vacancies in organisations delivering NHS healthcare can be found on the [NHS Jobs website](#) [11]
- Vacancies in local government can be found on the [Local Government Jobs website](#) [12] and the [Jobs Go Public website](#) [13]

Additionally, you can contact the human resources departments or hospital mortuary

manager at NHS acute/hospital trusts or local authority public mortuaries for information about opportunities.

As well as these sources, you may find suitable vacancies in the health sector by contacting local employers directly, searching in local newspapers and by using the [Universal Jobmatch tool](#) [14].

[Find out more about applications and interviews](#) [15], [16]

Volunteering is an excellent way of gaining experience (especially if you don't have enough for a specific paid job you're interested in) and also seeing whether you're suited to a particular type of work. It's also a great way to boost your confidence and you can give something back to the community.

[Find out more about volunteering and gaining experience](#) [17]

- Further information

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For further information about working in anatomical pathology, please contact:

- [Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology \(AAPT\)](#) [10]
- [The Royal Society for Public Health](#) [9]

Other roles that may interest you

- [Biomedical science](#) [18]
- [Infection sciences](#) [19]
- [Operating department practitioner](#) [20]
- [Experienced paramedic](#) [21]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/healthcare-science/roles-healthcare-science/life-sciences/anatomical-pathology>

Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pathology>
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- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/life-sciences/anatomical-pathology/entry-requirements-skills-and-interests>
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- [12] <http://www.lgjobs.com/>
- [13] <http://www.jobsgopublic.com/>

[14] <https://www.gov.uk/jobsearch>

[15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/planning-your-career/applications-and-interviews>

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[20] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/operating-department-practitioner>

[21] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/ambulance-service-team/roles-ambulance-service/experienced-paramedic>