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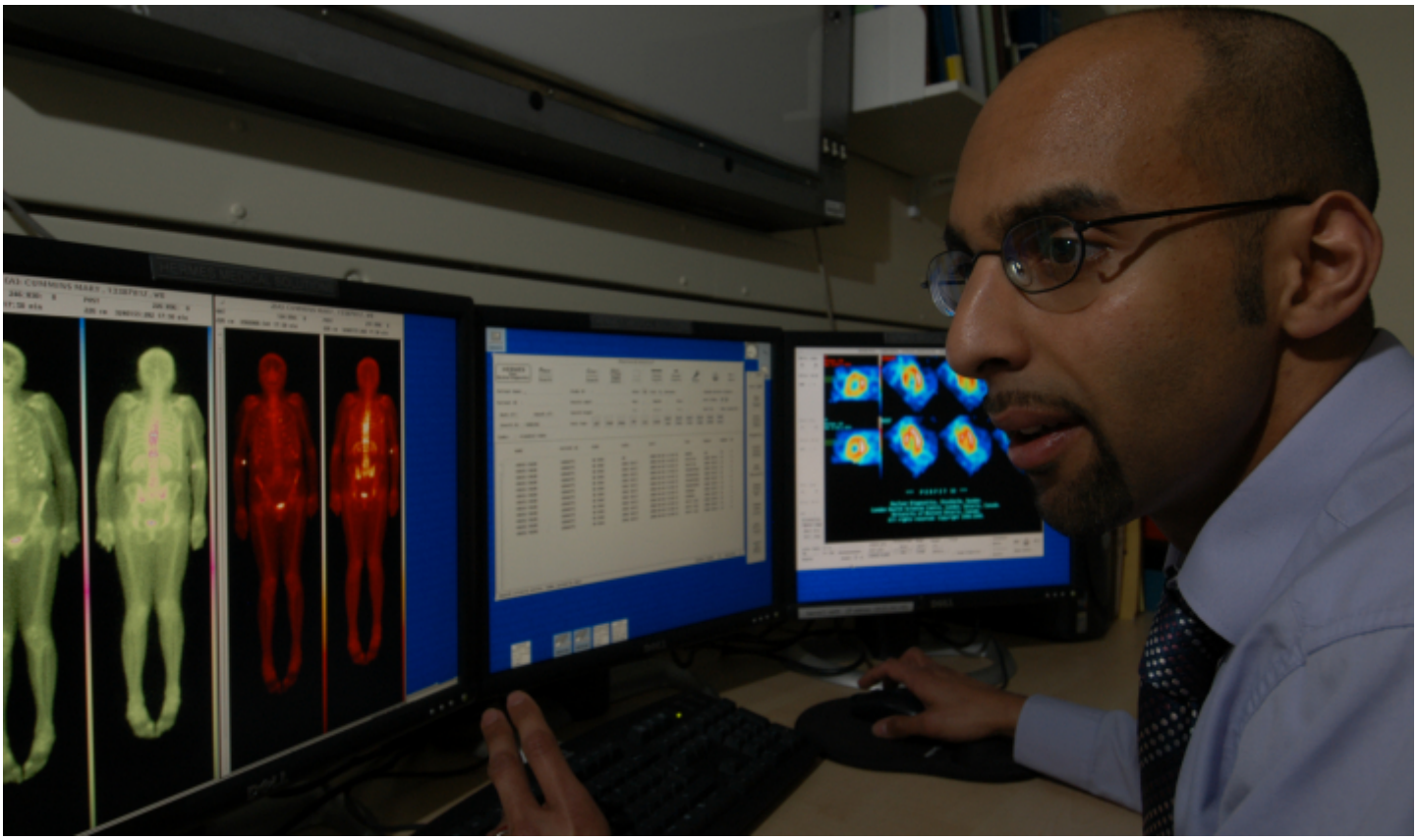
Nuclear medicine (healthcare scientist)

Nuclear medicine is the use of radioactive substances (such as radiolabelled pharmaceuticals) to help diagnose and treat patients.

In this area of healthcare science, you'll be actively involved in treating patients.



Role overview

Nuclear medicine uses small amounts of radioactive substances to look at what is happening the body, not just the physical changes that have already taken place. Images are taken which allow problems to be diagnosed, prevented and sometimes treated.

Working life

As a healthcare science practitioner working in nuclear medicine, you'll be administering radiolabelled pharmaceuticals to patients and then taking images and measurements using highly sophisticated equipment.

You'll also:

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- be responsible for ensuring the safety of the patient
- ensure the safety of your work colleagues during all aspects of the process
- be involved in interpreting results

Who will I work with?

You'll work as part of a team which includes other healthcare science staff working in physical science and biomedical engineering [1], doctors specialising in nuclear medicine [2] and radiology [3] and specialist nurses [4].

> "I enjoy caring for patients and making a difference to patients' lives." Rebecca's Pinhorne, Clinical technologist in nuclear medicine
>
> Read Rebecca's story in full [5].

Want to learn more?

- Find out more about the entry requirements, skills and interests required to enter a career as a healthcare scientist in nuclear medicine [6]
- Find out more about the training you'll receive for a career as a healthcare scientist in nuclear medicine [7]
- **Pay and conditions**

Most jobs in the NHS are covered by the Agenda for Change (AfC) [8] pay scales. This pay system covers all staff except doctors, dentists and the most senior managers. As a healthcare science practitioner, you'd usually start on band 5, with opportunities to progress to more senior positions. Trainee clinical scientists train at band 6 level, and qualified clinical scientists are generally appointed at band 7. With experience and further qualifications, you could apply for posts up to band 9.

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.

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Where the role can lead

With further training or experience or both, you may be able to develop your career further and apply for vacancies in areas such as further specialisation, management, research, or teaching.With further training or experience or both, you may be able to develop your career further and apply for vacancies in areas such as further specialisation, management, research, or teaching.

Healthcare science staff often work at the forefront of research and innovation, so that patients are continually receiving the very best healthcare. For example, in nuclear medicine, you could be developing new techniques to show what is happening in the body with radioactive drugs and gamma cameras.

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Job market and vacancies

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.

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 CV 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 [9]
- opportunities in the Civil Service can be found on the Civil Service Jobs website [10]
- vacancies in local government can be found on the Local Government Jobs website [11] and the Jobs Go Public website [12]

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 [13].

Find out more about applications and interviews [14].

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 [15].

- **Further information**

For further information about a career in nuclear medicine, please contact:

  - Academy for Healthcare Science [16]
  - The British Nuclear Medicine Society [17]
  - The British Nuclear Medicine Society [18] (careers website)
  - Health and Care Professions Council [19]
  - Institution of Physics and Engineering in Medicine [20]
  - National School of Healthcare Science [21]
  - UCAS [22]

Other roles that may interest you

- Pharmacist [23]
- Therapeutic radiographer [24]
- Clinical bioinformatics health informatics [25]
- Cellular sciences [26]

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Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/physical-sciences-and-biomedical-engineering
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[3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/clinical-radiology
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