

Real-life story - Dr Dev Datta

Dr Datta didn't take a direct route into chemical pathology. Following medical school, he completed several general medicine rotations and had initially planned to become a cardiologist. However, he changed his career path and is now an NHS consultant in chemical pathology and [metabolic](#) ^[1] medicine.

Dr Dev Datta

Consultant Metabolic Physician

Employer or university

University Hospital of Wales, Cardiff

Salary range

Over £65K

Photo of Dr Dev Datta

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How I got into the role

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Whilst training in cardiology I got involved in a research project which was part of my MD. This project included some laboratory work, as well as seeing patients. When I went back to my clinical role I missed the diversity of spending some time in the lab, as well as in clinic or on the ward. I therefore spoke to some chemical pathologist colleagues, and decided to train in chemical pathology and [metabolic](#) ^[1] medicine (a sub-specialty of chemical pathology). I also trained in obesity management at the Imperial Weight Centre London.

I found the prospect of a career as a chemical pathologist very attractive, because you tend to have some control over your own diverse work schedule, something which is important for me. I also saw that the specialty lends itself well to developing new interests, and you're also able to work with the latest scientific developments to improve patient care.

What I do

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I tend to spend 75% of my time doing clinical work ie seeing and treating patients and 25% doing lab work. Some chemical pathologists may spend more time involved with laboratory work.

My clinical time is spent dealing with a wide range of metabolic ^[1] disorders which may include looking after patients with abnormalities of blood chemistry, such as low sodium or calcium. I also see patients who are at a high risk of heart disease, usually due to high cholesterol and those with metabolic ^[1] problems related to poor nutrition. When I'm in the laboratory I'm usually working with scientific colleagues to help our service work as well as possible and providing advice to other healthcare professionals regarding the interpretation of results from our laboratory.

During an average day, I might spend a bit of time on all of the above aspects. For example, I may have a clinic in the morning, then various meetings, which could be about training or lab issues. I often deal with a number of phone calls or emails from GPs or hospital colleagues.

The best bits and challenges

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One of the attractions for me is the large and diverse range of people that I work with.. They include scientists (both bio-medical scientists and clinical scientists), medical colleagues, nurses and dieticians.

I also find my role allows the opportunity to explain complex medical conditions to patients, which I find highly fulfilling.

I love the variety and, the mix of clinical and lab work. I am very proud of developing and managing the array of services we offer.

Life outside work

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I like to keep fit by running and I also enjoy skiing. At present I have a young family and so much of my free time is spent bringing up my 18 month-old son and I am about to have a second child.

Chemical pathology allows me regular hours and flexibility and so I can share family responsibilities with my wife.

Career plans and top tips for others

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I'm developing a new weight management service which is due to be launched soon. Another new exciting challenge is that I'm course director for a new MSc in preventative cardiovascular ^[2] medicine.

Top tips:

- if you are curious about this specialty, speak to a chemical pathologist to find out more about it (you can find them in almost every large hospital)
- roles will vary from hospital to hospital so it's good to speak to more than one person

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Metabolic> [2]
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Cardiovascular>