

Histopathology (doctor)

Histopathologists are doctors who diagnose and study disease using expert medical interpretation of cells and tissue samples. The specialty determines the cause of death by performing autopsies and is integral to cancer management through staging and grading of tumours.

This page provides useful information on the nature of the work, the common procedures/interventions, sub-specialties and other roles that may interest you.



Nature of the work

Histopathologists work in the laboratory, both in partnership with laboratory scientists and doctors from other clinical specialties. They have an in-depth knowledge of both pathological and clinical aspects of disease.

The histopathologist is a member of the multidisciplinary team, assessing cancer patients and

planning their further investigation and treatment. They also have key responsibilities for cancer screening – currently for breast and cervical cancer but with bowel and prostate cancer screening on the horizon.

In many hospitals, biomedical scientists are undertaking more of the ‘routine’ cut-up of smaller specimens, and in some cases are also conducting microscopic examination and report writing of cytological samples.

With an increasing ability to automate and mechanise laboratory processes, there is the possibility that histopathology departments will no longer be necessary at smaller hospitals, and work may be managed centrally in dedicated histopathology centres with larger throughput capacity.

Some histopathologists have specific clinical roles, such as taking fine-needle [aspiration](#) ^[1] cytology specimens in breast clinics. However, they generally don’t see patients in person. Instead, they deal with specimens sent to the laboratory, or deceased patients in the mortuary.

Patient contact is limited, although they may see a patient to explain how their diagnosis has guided the patient’s treatment, or they may see the family of a deceased patient to explain the cause of death.

“We examine each case systematically to arrive at a diagnosis”. Dr Ayesha Azam, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Foundation

Read Ayesha’s story ^[2]

Common procedures/interventions

- examination and dissection of surgical resection specimens, to select the most appropriate samples for microscope slides
- microscopic examination of tissues, with subsequent construction of clinical reports
- carrying out fine-needle aspirations
- carrying out autopsies

Sub-specialties

There are no sub-specialties within histopathology. Instead, there are [CCT](#) ^[3] specialties to which you are appointed during training at ST3 level, after two years of general histopathology training.

The [CCT](#) ^[3] specialties are:

- forensic histopathology
- diagnostic neuropathology
- paediatric and perinatal pathology

There is increasing sub specialisation in histopathology, as in other specialties, with a decline in the traditional generalist histopathologist.

Want to learn more?

Find out more about:

- the working life ^[4] of someone in histopathology
- the entry requirements ^[5] and training and development ^[6]
- specialty training on the NHS Specialty Training website ^[7]
- how to succeed in your histopathology application on the BMJ website ^[8]
- two first-hand accounts of life:
 - as a specialty trainee (ST2) in histopathology ^[2]
 - as a consultant in cellular pathology ^[9]

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This section provides useful information about the pay for junior doctors (doctors in training), specialty doctors, consultants and general practitioners.

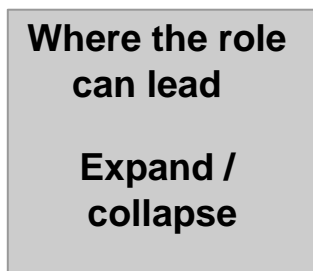
Find out more about the current pay scales for doctors ^[10], and there's more information on the BMA website ^[11].

NHS employers ^[12] provides useful advice and guidance on all NHS pay, contracts terms and conditions.

Medical staff working in private sector hospitals, the armed services or abroad will be paid on different scales.

There are opportunities within private practice for neurosurgeons.

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Read about consultant and non-consultant roles in histopathology, flexible working and about wider opportunities.

Consultant roles

You can apply for consultant roles six months prior to achieving your [Certificate of Completion of Training](#) ^[13] ([CCT](#) ^[3]). You will receive your [CCT](#) ^[3] at the end of your histopathology training.

Managerial opportunities for consultants include:

- clinical lead - lead NHS consultant for the team
- clinical director - lead NHS consultant for the department
- medical director - lead NHS consultant for the Trust

Most NHS consultants will be involved with clinical and educational supervision of junior doctors.

Here are some examples of education and training opportunities:

- director of medical education - the NHS consultant appointed to the hospital board who is responsible for the postgraduate medical training in a hospital. They work with the postgraduate dean to make sure training meets GMC standards.
- training programme director - the NHS consultant overseeing the education of the local cohort of trainee doctors eg [foundation training](#) ^[14] programme director. This role will be working within the LETB/deanery
- associate dean - the NHS consultant responsible for management of the entirety of a training programme. This role will be also be working within the LETB/deanery

SAS doctor roles

There are also opportunities to work at non-consultant level, for example as a SAS (Specialist and Associate Specialist) doctor.

SAS doctors (Staff, Associate Specialists and Specialty Doctors) work as career grade specialty doctors who are not in training or in consultant posts. You will need at least four postgraduate years training (two of those being in a relevant specialty) before you can apply for Specialty Doctor roles. Find out more about SAS doctors roles. ^[15]

Other non-training grade roles

These roles include:

- trust grade
- clinical fellows

Academic pathways

If you have trained on an academic histopathology pathway or are interested in research there are opportunities in academic medicine.

For those with a particular interest in research, you may wish to consider an academic career in histopathology. Whilst not essential, some doctors start their career with an academic foundation post. Entry is highly competitive. This enables them to develop skills in research and teaching alongside the basic competences in the foundation curriculum ^[16].

Entry into an academic career would usually start with an Academic Clinical Fellowship (ACF) at ST1-2 and may progress to a Clinical Lectureship (CL) at ST3 and beyond. Alternatively some trainees that begin with an ACF post then continue as an ST trainee on the clinical programme post-ST4.

After completion of the academic foundation trainees can then apply for academic core training posts (instead of normal core training). A PhD is often taken, either during core or specialty training.

Applications for entry into Academic Clinical Fellow posts are coordinated by the National Institute for Health Research Trainees Coordinating Centre (NIHRTCC). ^[17]

There are also numerous opportunities for trainees to undertake research outside of the ACF/CL route, as part of planned time out of their training programme. [Find out more about academic medicine.](#) ^[18]

The Clinical Research Network ^[19](CRN) actively encourages all doctors to take part in clinical research.

Other opportunities

Histopathologists often undertake research, which includes collaborating with colleagues in the UK and overseas, writing papers and presenting work at conferences.

The opportunities for research within this speciality are good.

There are also opportunities to work in the private sector and overseas.

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**Job market and
vacancies**

**Expand /
collapse**

This page provides useful information about the availability of jobs, how to find vacancies and sources of further information.

Job market information

At present there are 1,161 histopathology consultants and 391 medical registrars in England (NHS Digital, 2016 ^[20])

In 2016, the [competition ratio](#) ^[21] for CT1/ST1 Histopathology was 2.52 (NHS specialty training, 2016). ^[22]

For information regarding Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland please click on the links below.

[NHS Scotland medical and dental workforce data](#)

[NHS Wales medical and dental workforce data](#)

[Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety workforce information for Northern Ireland](#) ^[23]

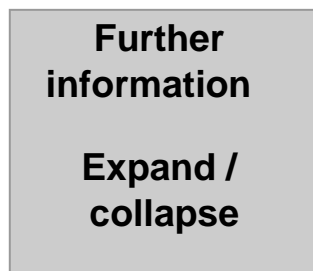
Where to look for vacancies

Histopathology training is open to those who may want to train flexibly on a less than full-time ^[24] basis (LTFT). You can request and apply for this after you have been offered the job. Restrictions apply.

Registration and applications for histopathology training is online via Oriel ^[25].

Northern Ireland has its own recruitment process. For more details please visit the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency ^[26] website.

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Organisations

[Association for Clinical Genetic Science](#) ^[27]

[British Academy of Forensic Sciences](#) ^[28]

[British Medical Association](#) ^[29]

[BMJ Careers](#) ^[30]

[General Medical Council](#) ^[31]

[Royal College of Pathologists](#) ^[32]

[The Pathological Society of Great Britain and Ireland](#) ^[33]

Real-life stories

Phil da Forno, histopathologist explaining why histopathology appealed to them (The Foundation Programme) [34]

Video case-studies

Dr Philip Kaye, consultant in histopathology (HEEM) [35]

Other roles that may interest you

- Chemical pathology [36]
- Haematology (doctor) [37]
- Immunology [38]
- Medical microbiology and virology (doctor) [39]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/pathology/histopathology-doctor>

Links

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

[2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pathology/histopathology-doctor/real-life-story-ayesha-azam>

[3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#CCT>

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pathology/histopathology-doctor/working-life>

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pathology/histopathology-doctor/entry-requirements-skills-and-interests>

[6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pathology/histopathology-doctor/training-and-development>

[7] <http://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/>

[8] http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/How_to_succeed_in_your_histopathology_application

[9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pathology/histopathology-doctor/real-life-story-nabeel-andrew-salmons>

[10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about-us/careers-medicine/pay-doctors>

[11] <http://bma.org.uk/practical-support-at-work/pay-fees-allowances/pay-scales>

[12] <http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/pay-and-reward>

[13] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Certificate_of_completion_of_training

[14] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training

[15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/currently-working-health/information-doctors/sas-doctors>

[16] <http://www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/pages/academic-programmes>

[17] <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/managing-centres/about-the-trainees-coordinating-centre.htm>

[18] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/clinical-academic-careers/clinical-academic-medicine/academic-clinical>

[19] <https://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/>

[20]

<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/searchcatalogue?productid=23451&topics=2%2fWorkforce%2fStaff+numbers%2fM>

[21] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Competition_ratio

[22] https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/Portals/1/Competition%20Ratios%202016%20ST1_1.pdf

[23] <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/staff-numbers>

[24] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/currently-working-health/information-doctors/less-full-time->

training-doctors

[25] <https://www.oriel.nhs.uk/Web/>

[26] <http://www.nimda.gov.uk/>

[27] <http://www.acgs.uk.com>

[28] <http://www.bafs.org.uk>

[29] <http://www.bma.org.uk>

[30] <http://careers.bmj.com/>

[31] <http://www.gmc-uk.org/>

[32] <http://www.rcpath.org>

[33] <http://www.pathsoc.org/>

[34] <http://www.foundationprogramme.nhs.uk/pages/home/your-career-path/histopathology>

[35] <https://www.eastmidlandsdeanery.nhs.uk/page.php?id=1248>

[36] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/pathology/chemical-pathology>

[37] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/pathology/haematology-doctor>

[38] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/immunology>

[39] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/pathology/microbiology-and-virology-doctor>