

"Working as part of a multidisciplinary team across various specialities is very rewarding. This means we are all applying our varied expertise together for patient care."

Dr Shivan Pancham

Consultant Haematologist



My hope is for Thalassaemia care to have better outcomes in terms of reduced complications, improved quality of life and further improvements in long term survival.

How I got into the role

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The haematology specialty was always an attractive career option since I was at medical school. There are so many different aspects and areas to get involved in. It's very exciting to be able to assess a patient's symptoms, then look down a microscope to make a diagnosis. The main reason I entered this field is to see the connection between genetic changes and the people I see in my every day clinical practice.

What I do

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My day varies. It can range from doing a ward round, where I review the patients who are admitted to hospital, or attending the emergency department, where my focus is to get patients through the acute phase of their illness. I do various clinics looking after people with a range of blood conditions. My job has many equally enjoyable aspects, such as reporting blood films and bone marrow tests, teaching and training, and participating in research.

The best bits and challenges

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Haemoglobin disorders are chronic conditions. Looking after patients over a long time means I can manage their symptoms and assess any complications, build relationships with patients and their families, and most importantly, advocate for this patient group.

Working as part of a multidisciplinary team across various specialities is very rewarding. This means we are all applying our varied expertise together for patient care. There are far too many patients I have helped to single one out, but the most memorable person for me is a close friend who sadly succumbed to the complications of thalassaemia.

These conditions are complex and there are many complications such as chronic pain that can be difficult to treat. There is limited awareness of haemoglobin disorders, including among health care professionals. Patients may face social stigma or discrimination due to their condition and part of my role would be to advocate for improvements in care.

Life outside work

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I enjoy listening to music, watching a good film and gardening.

Career plans and top tips for others

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If you're interested in both scientific understanding and improving patient care, choosing a career in haematology can be incredibly rewarding as it combines both. Haematology is also a varied career path with many different areas to specialise in. For example, you may be interested in haemato-oncology ^[1], transfusion medicine, coagulation disorders, non-malignant haematology, red cell disorders, or areas that focus predominantly on research.

To be a haematologist, you would need to be a medical doctor and then take further training in medicine and then haematology. But you don't have to be a doctor to work in haematology. Many different disciplines support patients with blood disorders. For example, biomedical scientists play a vital role in diagnostics.

The top three skills someone would need to succeed in this field are: having a scientific background or strong interest in science, have analytical and communication skills and being able to work as part of a multidisciplinary team.

If I were to describe my job in three words, I would choose: precision, empathy, and collaboration.

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Links

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