

Cardiothoracic surgeon

Cardiothoracic surgeons specialise in operating on the heart, lungs and other thoracic (chest) organs.

They also diagnose and treat diseases of these organs.

picture of a surgeon

Life as a cardiothoracic surgeon

You'll see the immediate and life-changing results of your work, but your role will be hugely demanding. Diseases that occur in a person's chest are common killers and you'll be managing life and death scenarios every day.

Cardiothoracic surgery is a relatively young speciality that has experienced rapid growth through the introduction of new technologies.

Before surgery you'll meet with patients and their families to discuss and explain procedures and offer reassurance. Being crystal clear, empathetic and warm is vital to the success of your role.

The main areas of cardiothoracic surgery are:

- cardiac surgery
- thoracic surgery
- congenital cardiac surgery
- heart and lung transplant surgery

Monitoring patients in intensive care [1] after surgery is a vital part of your work. Although cardiothoracic surgery is very safe, complications can occur and you'll need to be prepared to deal with a host of conditions including arrhythmias (heart-beat irregularity), post-operative bleeding, stroke [2], pleural effusion (fluid around the lungs), wound infection or thrombosis [3].

As well as performing surgery, you'll be involved in the treatment and management of many different conditions within your speciality. You'll need to attend outpatient clinics, multidisciplinary team meetings and ward rounds.

How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your [foundation training](#) ^[4] after medical school. Find out details of current salary ranges for foundation and specialty training, [SAS doctors](#) ^[5] and consultants on the ['Pay for doctors'](#) ^[6] page.

How about the benefits?

- make a difference
- flexible and part-time working
- high income early in your career
- work anywhere in the world
- excellent pension scheme
- good holiday entitlement
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

Must-have skills

- excellent communication skills to manage a wide range of relationships with colleagues, and patients and their families
- emotional resilience, a calm temperament and the ability to work well under pressure
- teamwork and the capacity to lead multidisciplinary teams
- problem-solving and diagnostic skills
- outstanding organisational ability and effective decision-making skills
- first-class time and resource management for the benefit of patients
- a high degree of manual dexterity
- superb hand-eye co-ordination, excellent vision, and visuospatial awareness
- physical stamina to cope with the demands of surgery

Entry requirements

Your first step is medical school. Typically, you'll need excellent GCSEs and three A or A* passes at A level including chemistry for a five-year undergraduate degree in medicine. Many medical schools also ask for biology and others may require maths or physics.

If you already have a degree, you could study for a four-year postgraduate degree in medicine.

You'll need to pass an interview and admissions test. You'll be asked to show how you demonstrate the NHS values such as compassion and respect.

Some medical schools look to recruit a mix of students from different backgrounds and geographical areas, so your educational and economic background and family circumstances could be considered as part of your application.

"I had some great mentors who gave me the opportunity to operate on patients with supervision, and to look after very sick patients on the [intensive care](#) ^[1] unit after cardiac surgery."

Read Omar's story ^[7].

What are my chances of starting a career as a cardiothoracic surgeon?

There are currently approximately 400 cardiothoracic surgeons working in the NHS in England. In 2020, there were between 5.86 and 9.92 applications for every specialty training place.

How to become a cardiothoracic surgeon

After medical school, you'll join the paid two-year foundation programme ^[8] where you'll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid specialty training ^[9] to become a cardiothoracic surgeon, which will take a minimum of six or seven years.

You may be able to train part time, for example for health reasons or if you have family or caring responsibilities.

Where a career as a cardiothoracic surgeon can take you

Working as a cardiothoracic surgeon, you'll have the opportunity to specialise in cardiac, thoracic or congenital surgery.

As a cardiac surgeon, you'll perform various kinds of surgery including:

- coronary artery bypass surgery – restoring blood flow to the heart by bypassing the narrowed coronary arteries
- heart valve surgery – repairing and replacing narrowed or leaking heart valves
- aortic surgery – replacing an enlarged or damaged blood vessel leaving the heart

If you choose to specialise as a thoracic surgeon, you'll perform a wide range of surgery including:

- surgery for lung cancer, tumours and cysts
- surgery on collapsed or infected lungs
- keyhole thoracic surgery (video assisted thoracoscopic surgery (VATS))
- chest-wall deformities (pectus surgery)

If you choose congenital cardiac surgery, you'll treat babies and children with heart diseases that have been present from birth. These conditions include:

- septal defects (a hole between two of the heart's chambers)
- aortic and pulmonary valve stenosis (where the valve is narrower than normal)
- transposition of the arteries

You could specialise or conduct research, teach medical students or postgraduate students in training and get involved in research at universities, the NHS or private sector.

- **Live vacancies**

Find a vacancy

Enter your location or postcode

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- **Consultant Cardiothoracic Anaesthetist**

Wolverhampton, WV10 0QP

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Cardiothoracic Anaesthetist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[10]

- **Cardiothoracic Radiology Fellowship**

London, W2 1NY

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Radiology Fellowship job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[11]

- **Specialist Radiographer (Cardiothoracic)**

Southampton, SO16 6YD

Salary:

£37338.00 to £44962.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospital Southampton NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Specialist Radiographer \(Cardiothoracic\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[12]

- **Consultant Cardiothoracic Radiologist**

Tooting, SW17 0QT

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Cardiothoracic Radiologist job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[13]

- **Cardiothoracic Advanced Nurse Practitioner**

London, W12 0HS

Salary:

£44806.00 to £60981.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Advanced Nurse Practitioner job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[14]

- **Locum Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia**

Manchester, M23 9LT

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant in Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[15]

- **Consultant Breast Surgeon**

Swansea, SA2 8QA

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Swansea Bay University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[16]

- **Consultant Cardiac Surgeon**

Bristol, BS2 8HN

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust (UHBW)

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Cardiac Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[17]

- **Consultant - Urological Surgeon**

Slough, SL2 4HL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant - Urological Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[18]

- **Consultant Dermatology Surgeon**

Canterbury, CT1 3NG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Dermatology Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[19]

- **Consultant - Urological Surgeon**

Slough, SL2 4HL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant - Urological Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[18]

- **Consultant Dermatology Surgeon**

Canterbury, CT1 3NG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Dermatology Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[19]

- **Consultant Spinal Surgeon**

Sheffield, S11 8UX

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

One Health Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Spinal Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[20]

- **Consultant Hand Surgeon**

Bristol, BS7 8SA

Bristol, BS11 0QE

Bristol, BS9 3AA

Bristol, BS10 6AF

Bristol, BS34 6BQ

Bristol, BS15 4EJ

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Locum

Employer:

HealthHarmonie

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Hand Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#)

[21]

- **Consultant Histopathologist with interest in Cardiothoracic Pathology**

Basildon, SS16 5NL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Histopathologist with interest in Cardiothoracic Pathology job \(opens in a new window\)](#) [22]

- **Senior Clinical Fellow in Cardiothoracic Critical Care**

Cambridge Bio Medical Campus, CB2 0AY

Salary:

£70425.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Senior Clinical Fellow in Cardiothoracic Critical Care job \(opens in a new window\)](#) [23]

- **Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia & Cardiac Intensive Care Fellowship - ST3+**

Blackpool, FY3 8NR

Salary:

£61825.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Cardiothoracic Anaesthesia & Cardiac Intensive Care Fellowship - ST3+ job \(opens in a new window\)](#) [24]

- **Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon**

Cambridge Bio Medical Campus, CB2 0AY

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[25]

- **Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon**

Sheffield, S10 2TH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Plastic Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[26]

- **ENT Consultant Surgeon (General)**

Middlesbrough, TS4 3BW

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for ENT Consultant Surgeon \(General\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[27]

- **Consultant Urological Surgeon - Core**

Manchester, M23 9LT

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Urological Surgeon - Core job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[28]

- **Locum Consultant Spine Surgeon**

Salisbury, SP2 8BJ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Spine Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[29]

- **Locum Consultant Bariatric Surgeon**

London, N19 5NF

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Whittington Hospital NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Bariatric Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[30]

- **Consultant General & UGI Surgeon**

Brighton, BN2 5BE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust (279)

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General & UGI Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[31]

- **Consultant Paediatric Spinal Surgeon**

London, WC1N 3JH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Paediatric Spinal Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[32]

- **Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon**

Liverpool, L14 3PE

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Thoracic Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[33]

- **Consultant Gastroenterologist/ Colorectal Surgeon**

Manchester, M22 4DB

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Beacon Medical Services Group Ltd

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Gastroenterologist/ Colorectal Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[34]

- **Orthopaedic Surgeon Hip & Knee**

Sutton Coldfield, B75 5BL

Salary:

£7200.00

Type:

Bank

Employer:

Medinet Clinical Services Limited

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Orthopaedic Surgeon Hip & Knee job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[35]

- **Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon**

Bury St. Edmunds, IP33 2QZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oncoplastic Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[36]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Hip & Paediatric)**

Swansea, SA6 6NL

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Swansea Bay University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon \(Hip & Paediatric\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[37]

- **Locum Consultant Colorectal & General Surgeon**

Blackpool, FY3 8NR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Colorectal & General Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[38]

- **Locum Consultant Spinal Deformity Surgeon**

Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2AP

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Spinal Deformity Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[39]

- **Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 7.5 hours**

Reading, RG1 4QA

Salary:

£101000.00 to £151000.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 7.5 hours job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[40]

- **Consultant Hip and Knee Surgeon**

Sheffield, S11 8UX

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

One Health Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Hip and Knee Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[41]

- **Consultant General Surgeon (Upper GI)**

Sheffield, S11 8UX

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

One Health Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General Surgeon \(Upper GI \) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[42]

- **Fellowship-trained Foot & Ankle Surgeon**

Sheffield, S11 8UX

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

One Health Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Fellowship-trained Foot & Ankle Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[43]

- **Locum Consultant Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgeon**

Grimsby, DN33 2BA

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Trauma & Orthopaedic Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[44]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon (Foot & ankle)**

Torquay, TQ2 7AA

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon \(Foot & ankle\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[45]

- **Consultant General Surgeon (Lower GI)**

Sheffield, S11 8UX

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

One Health Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General Surgeon \(Lower GI \) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[46]

- **Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 15 hours**

Birmingham, B30 1DB

Salary:

£101000.00 to £151000.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Treatment Doctor / Surgeon - 15 hours job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[47]

- **Locum Consultant Complex Spine Surgeon**

Plymouth, PL6 8DH

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Locum

Employer:

University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant Complex Spine Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[48]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Foot and Ankle**

Shepton Mallet, BA4 4LP

Salary:

Negotiable

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Practice Plus Group

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Foot and Ankle job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[49]

- **Consultant Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon (Head & Neck)**

Swansea, SA6 6NL

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Swansea Bay University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon \(Head & Neck\) job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[50]

- **Consultant ENT Head & Neck Cancer Surgeon**

Rhyl, LL18 5UJ

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant ENT Head & Neck Cancer Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[51]

- **Consultant Oncoplastic and Reconstructive Breast Surgeon**

Wakefield, WF14DG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

The Mid Yorkshire Teaching NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oncoplastic and Reconstructive Breast Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[52]

- **Consultant Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon Orthoplastics/Head & Neck**

Swansea, SA6 6NL

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Swansea Bay University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon Orthoplastics/Head & Neck job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[53]

- **Consultant Surgeon in Paediatric Trauma and Orthopaedics**

Manchester, M13 9WL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Surgeon in Paediatric Trauma and Orthopaedics job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[54]

- **Consultant ENT Surgeon with an interest in Otology**

London, E1 1FR

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Barts Health NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant ENT Surgeon with an interest in Otology job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[55]

- **Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Specialising in Soft Tissue Knee**

Stoke on Trent, ST4 6QG

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

University Hospital of North Midlands NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon - Specialising in Soft Tissue Knee job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[56]

- **Locum Consultant in Burns & Plastic Surgery- Consultant Hand Surgeon**

Manchester, M23 9LT

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Locum Consultant in Burns & Plastic Surgery- Consultant Hand Surgeon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[57]

- **Royal College of Surgeons Fellow in Anterior Skull Base**

Leeds, LS1 3EX

Salary:

£70425.00

Type:

Fixed-Term

Employer:

Leeds Teaching Hospitals

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Royal College of Surgeons Fellow in Anterior Skull Base job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[58]

- **Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon with interest in TMD**

East Grinstead, RH19 3DZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon with interest in TMD job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[59]

- **Consultant Plastic Surgeon with a Special Interest in Breast Recon**

East Grinstead, RH19 3DZ

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Plastic Surgeon with a Special Interest in Breast Recon job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[60]

- **Consultant General Surgeon with a Sub Specialty in Colorectal Surgery**

Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 9DT

Salary:

£106000.00 to £154760.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant General Surgeon with a Sub Specialty in Colorectal Surgery job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[61]

- **Consultant Urological Surgeon SI in Non-muscle-invasive bladder cancer**

Dartford, DA2 8DA

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Urological Surgeon SI in Non-muscle-invasive bladder cancer job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[62]

- **Consultant Plastic Surgeon with a Special Interest in Burns and Trauma**

East Grinstead, RH194EL

Salary:

£105504.00 to £139882.00

Type:

Permanent

Employer:

Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

[Apply now on NHS Jobs for Consultant Plastic Surgeon with a Special Interest in Burns and Trauma job \(opens in a new window\)](#) ^[63]

- **Further information**

These organisations have further information about being a cardiothoracic surgeon, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

[Royal College of Surgeons](#) ^[64]

[Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh](#) ^[65]

[Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow](#) ^[66]

[Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery in Great Britain and Ireland](#) ^[67]

And hear from people working as cardiothoracic surgeons.

[A career in cardiothoracic surgery \(BMJ\)](#) ^[68]

[A day in the life of a thoracic surgeon \(CTSNET\)](#) ^[69]

[A day in a heart surgeon's life \(CTSNET\)](#) ^[70]

Other roles that may interest you

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