

# Rheumatology

Rheumatologists are doctors who investigate, diagnose, manage and rehabilitate patients with disorders of the musculoskeletal system such as the locomotor apparatus, bone and soft connective tissues.

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

These conditions include inflammatory and non-inflammatory disorders which predominantly affect the joints, bones, muscles and soft tissues. Although the prevalence of some conditions such as arthritis rises with age, musculoskeletal conditions may affect all age groups and specialists see a large variety of patients.

Rheumatologists treat conditions such as:

- inflammatory joint disease, eg rheumatoid arthritis
- degenerative joint disease, eg osteoarthritis
- autoimmune disease [1], eg lupus

- back problems
- soft tissue disorders, eg tennis elbow
- metabolic [2] bone disorders, eg osteoporosis
- crystal arthropathies, eg gout
- musculoskeletal infections

## Common procedures/interventions

These include:

- physical examination
- x-ray and other imaging methods
- laboratory tests
- drug treatments
- soft tissue and joint injections
- spinal injections for relief of back pain
- biopsy [3] procedures such synovial or muscle biopsies
- musculoskeletal ultrasound [4]

## Sub-specialties

Many rheumatologists develop sub-specialty interests such as:

- paediatric rheumatology
- metabolic [2] bone disease
- neurophysiology
- sports medicine
- autoimmune multi-system connective tissue diseases

Many will also have commitments in general internal medicine.

## Want to learn more?

Find out more about:

- the [working life \[5\]](#) of someone in rheumatology
- the entry requirements [6] and training and development [7]

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Pay and conditions

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

Find out more about the current pay scales for doctors [8], and there's more information on the BMA website [9].

NHS Employers [10] 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.

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Where the role can lead

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Read about consultant and non-consultant roles in rheumatology, 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 [11] (CCT [12]). You will receive your CCT [12] at the end of your rheumatology 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 [13] 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**

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 SAS roles.

Find out more about being an SAS doctor [14].

### **Other non-training grade roles**

These roles include:

- trust grade
- clinical fellows

### **Academic pathways**

If you have trained on an academic rheumatology 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 rheumatology. Whilst not essential, some doctors start their career with an Academic Foundation post. This enables them to develop skills in research and teaching alongside the basic competences in the foundation curriculum.

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

Applications for entry into Academic Clinical Fellow posts are coordinated by the National Institute for Health Research Trainees Coordinating Centre (NIHRTCC). [15]

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. [16]

The Clinical Research Network [17](CRN) actively encourages all doctors to take part in clinical research.

### **Other opportunities**

There are opportunities to be employed by the NHS, academic institutions, private sector, universities, the armed forces, organisations and national governing bodies.

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Job market and vacancies

This section provides useful information about the availability of jobs, finding vacancies and where to find out more.

### **Job market information**

NHS Digital regularly publish workforce statistics which show the number of full time equivalent consultants and doctors in training for each specialty: NHS Digital workforce statistics [18].

Competition ratios for medical specialty training places are published on Health Education England's specialty training webpage [19].

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](#) [20]

### **Where to look for vacancies**

All trainees apply through the online application system Oriel [21]. You will be able to register for training, view all vacancies, apply, book interviews and assessment centres, and manage offers made to you.

Local education and training boards (LETBs)/deaneries will have details of training vacancies. Not all LETBs/deaneries will offer new training posts in all specialties in all years.

All jobs will be advertised on the NHS Jobs website [22].

Northern Ireland has its own recruitment process. For further details please visit the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency [23] website.

The BMJ Careers website [24] also advertises vacancies.

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Further information

### **Organisations**

Royal College of Physicians [25]

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh [26]

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow [27]

British Society for Rheumatology [28]

Arthritis Research UK [29]

### **Real-life stories**

Dr Alan J Hakim, consultant in rheumatology and acute medicine (RCP) [30]

Dr Derek Baxter, consultant rheumatologist (RCPE) [31]

Dr Muhammad Farooq Kazmi – ST6, consultant rheumatologist (RCPE) [32]

## **Other roles that may interest you**

- General internal medicine [33]
- Immunology [34]
- Rehabilitation medicine [35]
- Sport and exercise medicine [36]

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**Source URL:** <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/rheumatology>

### **Links**

[1] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Autoimmune\\_disease](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Autoimmune_disease)

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

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

[4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Ultrasound>

[5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/medicine/rheumatology/working-life>

[6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/medicine/rheumatology/entry-requirements-skills-and-interests>

[7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/medicine/rheumatology/training-and-development>

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

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

- [10] <http://www.nhsemployers.org/>
- [11] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Certificate\\_of\\_completion\\_of\\_training](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Certificate_of_completion_of_training)
- [12] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#CCT>
- [13] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation\\_training](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training)
- [14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/currently-working-health/information-doctors/sas-doctors>
- [15] <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/how-we-are-managed/managing-centres/about-the-trainees-coordinating-centre.htm>
- [16] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/currently-working-health/clinical-academic-careers/clinical-academic-medicine>
- [17] <http://www.crn.nihr.ac.uk/>
- [18] <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics>
- [19] <https://specialtytraining.hee.nhs.uk/Competition-Ratios>
- [20] <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/staff-numbers>
- [21] <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/workforce.htm>
- [22] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [23] <http://www.nimda.gov.uk/>
- [24] <http://careers.bmj.com>
- [25] <http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/>
- [26] <http://www.rcpe.ac.uk/>
- [27] <http://www.rcpsg.ac.uk>
- [28] <http://www.rheumatology.org.uk/>
- [29] <http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/>
- [30] <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/education-practice/interview/specialty-career-profile-rheumatology-and-acute-medicine>
- [31] <http://www.rcpe.ac.uk/careers-resource/rheumatology>
- [32] <https://www.rcpe.ac.uk/careers-resource/rheumatology-2>
- [33] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/general-internal-medicine>
- [34] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/immunology>
- [35] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/rehabilitation-medicine>
- [36] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/sport-and-exercise-medicine>