

Working life (rheumatology)

This page provides useful information about the roles and responsibilities of rheumatologists, where they work, who they work with and what they feel about their role.

?I enjoy working within a team and managing the acute aspects of rheumatology such as the acute joint flare treated rapidly and effectively with a joint injection. The management of early arthritis has been transformed and we are working towards effective disease remission and decline in disability, need for joint surgery and loss of employment. Following-up individuals and building a relationship over a long period is rewarding and sharing care in areas of their condition with primary care again fosters close links.? (Consultant rheumatologist)

Rheumatology is mostly an outpatient specialty although patients with complicated multi-system disorders may need inpatient care. Much of a rheumatologist's working day is spent with patients and most are seen in an outpatient department or one of the growing number of day assessment and treatment centres. The number of patients seen in a day will vary, but clinics are usually very busy. A mixed clinic of new and follow-up cases might include three to four new patients and eight to ten follow-up patients.

?Shared care? arrangements are also becoming more common with specialists and GPs jointly looking after patients with conditions such as inflammatory arthritis.

As this specialty looks after patients with long-term conditions, there is a considerable amount of administration and liaison with the multidisciplinary team and other agencies. In most areas, there is active participation in continuing medical education, audit and research.

On-call and shift work in rheumatology is usually either very light or non-existent, although rheumatologists may contribute to the general medical on-call rota.

Just over 25% of consultants say they are routinely on-call at weekends.

- Who you will work with?

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Rheumatologists work alongside:

- specialist nurses [1]
- physiotherapists [2]
- occupational therapists [3]
- medical secretaries and administrative staff [4]

They also work closely with:

- orthopaedic surgeons [5]
- hand surgeons
- other medical specialists, eg in neurology [6], rehabilitation medicine [7], immunology [8]
- podiatrists [9]
- Attractions and challenges of the role

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Enjoyable aspects of work include developing rapport with patients over a period of time and working within multidisciplinary teams. This is an interesting and challenging specialty with over 200 disorders to look after, active areas of translational research and new treatments being developed. However, limited treatment options for some conditions such as osteoarthritis remains a challenge as does funding for ?expensive? drug treatments.

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

Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/resources/careers-nursing>
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/physiotherapist>
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