

Working life (CPT)

This page provides useful information on the working week as well as any on call [1] and other commitments, along with information on who you will work with. The attractions and challenges of the job are also in this section.

My busy week is split between treating patients in hospital, running clinical toxicology clinics, doing some national advisory work, lecturing and education. With patients I'm ensuring the safe and effective use of medicines or dealing with adverse reactions to drugs. In the Welsh National Poisons Unit we see around 1,700 patients a year - over five a day - who have self-harmed or been poisoned. Through the National Poisons Information Service I advise other hospitals how to manage poisoned patients. I also advise on whether particular medicines should be made available so that our patients aren't deprived of the benefits of new drugs to market. -

Dr. John Thompson, Senior Lecturer in Clinical Pharmacology Wales College of Medicine Cardiff University

How your time is spent

The work of consultants in clinical pharmacology and therapeutics can be quite varied depending on whether you work for hospitals, university medical faculties, pharmaceutical companies or government drug regulatory bodies.

Most NHS and academic CPT consultants are dual accredited in general internal medicine (GIM). There are a small number of consultants who combine CPT with geriatric medicine, paediatrics, neurology, oncology [2], respiratory [3] medicine, rheumatology, cardiology, rehabilitation medicine or acute medicine.

NHS consultants working in teaching hospitals typically spend about half their time seeing inpatients, supervising acute admissions and running outpatient clinics. They will see patients of all ages (including children) with a wide range of conditions and complex therapeutic problems. They might see four to six new patients and 10-15 follow-up patients at an outpatient clinic. The demand for outpatient appointments in CPT has increased significantly in recent years.

Research usually occupies part of the working week. Many CPT consultants undertake translational research, which aims to find new treatments for patients. They may also spend time supervising PhD students.

Academic clinical pharmacologists are usually employed by a university and divide their time between research, teaching and clinical practice. Their clinical practice includes general medicine with or without a sub-specialty interest, such as cardiovascular risk management, toxicology, airways disease, epilepsy or gastroenterology. They often have a role in medicines management.

Most CPT consultants spend about five hours a week, or 10% of their time involved in teaching. They teach medical students the basic principles of clinical pharmacology, practical therapeutics and how to prescribe safely. They may also teach hospital junior doctors, CPT trainees and other healthcare professionals including nurses, pharmacists, dentists and GPs.

Some consultants are either employed by pharmaceutical companies or they hold joint appointments with academic units or trusts. They spend their time on the development of new drugs and clinical trials in patients.

CPT consultants who serve on drug and therapeutics committees, research ethics committees and formulary committees typically spends about half their time in supervision of acute medical admissions, with responsibility for medical inpatients and running outpatient clinics.

On call and working hours

Most CPT consultants work a normal working day. They may work from around 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday. Some CPT consultants who run experimental medicines or clinical research units may be on call.

Clinical pharmacologists often have a role in acute medicine and general medicine, and will participate in the on call rota for the supervision of receiving and triaging emergency admissions.

The frequency of on-call will vary dependent on your local NHS Trust.? The on call will typically involve looking after a wide variety of patients that fit within the general medical category, but some specialist patients including those affected by poisoning, adverse drug reactions or malignant hypertension (high blood pressure) may also be referred to CPT depending on local procedures.

- Who they work with?

Expand / collapse

Who will you work with?

CPT consultants work alongside:

- nurses
- clinical pharmacists [4], laboratory staff (eg clinical biochemists) and other professional and technical staff in multidisciplinary teams (MDT), for example, when carrying out clinical trials
- clinical staff, local health authority administrators and public health officials, for example, when regulating the prescription of drugs
- nationally with regulators in organisations such as the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) [5] and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) [6]
- medical secretaries and administrative staff

They also work closely with:

- patient groups
- Attractions and challenges of the role

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This specialty appeals to those who are interested in advancing the science and practice of clinical pharmacology to improve the treatment of disease (therapeutics) for the benefit of patients and society. Developing and understanding new drug therapies and promoting improved understanding of these issues among both doctors and patients is fulfilling.

It can be rewarding to educate doctors in evidence-based medicine, and the development of guidelines. It can also be rewarding to involve patients in therapeutic choices, informed consent and self-care.

The variety of work is enjoyable and the sense of satisfaction from delivering a high-quality service working in a multidisciplinary team is very rewarding. The diversity of the work being undertaken is a major attraction of the specialty, and many clinical pharmacologists often say that 'they do something different every day'.

New medicines and new indications for existing drugs are being developed all the time so the need to keep up-to-date can be challenging but this is offset by the excitement of advances such as those in molecular genetics and personalised medicine which are set to transform drug therapeutics and treatments.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/clinical-pharmacology-and-therapeutics/working-life>

Links

- [1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#On_call
- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Oncology>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Respiratory>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pharmacy/pharmacist>
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- [6] <https://www.nice.org.uk/>