

Name
Melanie York
Specialty
Allergy
Current job title and grade
Specialty Registrar in Allergy
Hospital/trust
University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust
What influenced you/made you decide to choose your specialty?
<p>My career path initially started with 'old style' pre-registration house jobs in medicine and surgery followed by a pilot FY2 year in A&E, cardiology and general practice and then Acute Care Common Stem training (ST1 and ST2 years). During this time I completed MRCP examinations but decided that I didn't wish to pursue Acute Medicine as a specialty from ST3 onwards. Following my ST2 year, Allergy was offered as a run-through training speciality as Modernising Medical Careers had just been introduced. After reading the Allergy job description and speaking to consultants in both Immunology and Allergy, I decided to apply for the Allergy training.</p> <p>The attraction to allergy as a specialty for me include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A non - acute speciality with outpatient based clinics in both adult and paediatric allergy, food and drug challenge clinics and immunotherapy clinics 2. Option to complete an Immunology and Allergy MSc with associated research project 3. Many opportunities to attend regional, national and international allergy and immunology teaching days and conferences 4. From a lifestyle point of view, as an Allergy trainee you do not do out-of -hours, oncall or weekend shifts!
What was your first experience in your specialty like? (Did you hit it off immediately?)
<p>Having come from ACCS, Allergy was completely different. I prefer an outpatient based speciality, however it did take time to adjust particularly coming from an A&E post which was a very different experience!</p>
What training do you have to do to get to your specialty?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completion of Foundation years 1 and 2 2. Followed by either Core Medical training (CT1 and CT2 years) or ACCS (ST1 and ST2) 3. To complete the MRCP membership examinations <p>Allergy training is 5 years in total and it takes you from ST3 to ST7. There is a comprehensive Allergy curriculum to follow during this time covering 14 topic areas: Fundamental immunological knowledge, Relevant laboratory experience, Asthma, Rhinitis, Atopic dermatitis, Food allergy, Drug and vaccine allergy, Insect venom allergy, Urticaria and angioedema, Anaphylaxis, Latex allergy, Allergen immunotherapy, Paediatric allergy, Unconventional therapies and Immunodeficiency.</p>
Do you work closely with other specialties?

Yes – particularly Immunology

Allergy is a non organ based speciality and to complete the curriculum you spend time rotating through various other related specialities. Dermatology, Immunology, Respiratory and ENT are the types of posts you would be expected to gain experience in.

What are your typical working hours? Are they sociable/family-friendly hours?

Monday to Friday 9-5pm. No weekends or on calls!

How much annual leave do you get?

Standard annual leave for a full time trainee: 32 days per year plus bank holidays

Are there opportunities for travel?

Yes – there are opportunities to attend international allergy conferences

Are there opportunities for teaching or lecturing?

Yes - plenty at local, regional and national meetings.

Are there opportunities for research?

Yes – I completed a research project as part of a Masters degree.
Allergy is both a clinical and academic specialty so there are many allergy trainees who go on to complete further research and/or higher research degrees (PhDs)

Do you work closely with other healthcare colleagues or groups? Which groups?

Allergy is very much a multidisciplinary team specialty. In Leicester, the Clinical Immunology and Allergy department is a multidisciplinary team including Allergists, Immunologists, specialist nurses and dieticians. The monthly Allergy MDT meeting provides a forum to discuss the complex and interesting cases.

What are the best aspects of working in your specialty?

1. Varied clinical work e.g. in both adult/paediatric allergy and placements in other related specialities
2. Interesting and unusual patient cases presenting to the clinic
3. Excellent national training days

Is there a typical location for working in your specialty? E.g. teaching hospitals, community? Rural? City?

Yes, typically tertiary referral centres and teaching hospitals

What other jobs, roles, societies, publications, charities and working parties have you been involved in?

I am currently the Junior member representative for the British Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (BSACI).

As we are a small specialty with few trainees there are many opportunities to represent the junior members of this speciality.

What advice would you give to someone considering a career in your specialty?

Speak to current trainees to get a feel for the specialty. It's important to decide whether a non acute specialty is your preferred career choice.

Day in the life of.....an Allergy Registrar

8.15am

Arrive early to work to catch up on admin and have morning coffee

9am

Drug Allergy Challenge clinic with challenges performed to a variety of drugs including penicillins, paracetamol, general and local anaesthetic agents.

1pm

Allergy team meeting with the consultants and Allergy specialist nurses

1.30pm

Adult allergy outpatient clinic – Typical cases include food, venom and drug allergy, asthma, rhinitis and chronic urticaria

5pm

Finish any admin work and head for home!

Other days will vary with one clinic (either the general allergy or immunotherapy desensitisation clinic) in the morning followed by admin, audit and teaching in the afternoon.