

<b>Name</b>
Helen A Brough
<b>Specialty</b>
Paediatric Allergy and Clinical Immunology
<b>Current job title and grade</b>
Clinical Lecturer in Paediatric Allergy and Paediatric Allergy and Clinical Immunology GRID trainee
<b>Hospital/trust</b>
Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Foundation Hospital and King's College London University
<b>What influenced you/made you decide to choose your specialty?</b>
I was impressed with people that I met in the paediatric allergy field. They were all open minded, research orientated, approachable people. Also I liked the idea of a specialty where you still are dealing with multiple organ systems. Thus you can be a specialist in allergy but also deals with almost every organ system as allergy can affect the lungs (asthma), nose/eyes (rhinitis), skin (eczema) and gut (eosinophilic gut problems).
<b>What was your first experience in your specialty like? (Did you hit it off immediately?)</b>
I enjoyed the specialty immediately and had a steep learning curve as there is very little paediatric allergy training in undergraduate medicine.
<b>Did you always want to train in this specialty? When did you decide?</b>
No. I first decided I wanted to be a paediatrician when I worked in A&E and preferred covering paediatric A&E than adult A&E. I then decided to get into paediatric allergy when I attended an Allergy Academy course and heard leading allergists speak about their field and got to speak to many of them myself.
<b>Did you follow a different specialist training pathway to begin with? If so, what was your reason for changing your career path?</b>
I initially wanted to be a Gastroenterologist but was put off by a job in this field as a house officer. However now I am able to do a lot of gastroenterology within allergy and run a joint Allergy/Gastroenterology clinic which is very enjoyable.
<b>What rotations did you do in your training (if appropriate)? What did you find helpful?</b>
I found working at Northwick Park Hospital in my core paediatric training very helpful in order to assist in the paediatric allergy clinics before taking up my post in Paediatric Allergy at St. Thomas' Hospital. I have been there now for 4 years and have enjoyed every day there.
<b>What training do you have to do to get to your specialty?</b>
To be a GRID trainee in Paediatric Allergy and Clinical Immunology you need to show an interest by having attended paediatric allergy clinics. It is also useful to have some paediatric immunology experience. A research interest is also important and there are two Allergy MSc courses at the University of Southampton and Imperial which I would highly recommend. The Allergy Academy also runs practical courses throughout the year at St. Thomas' Hospital if you want to get an insight (like I did).  Once you are a BSACI member then you can attend regional training days 2-3 times a year for free (you can pay to go if you are not a member) and the BSACI conference which is excellent. Also join the BPAIIG (British Paediatric Allergy Immunology and Infectious Diseases Group) allows you to attend their regional modules twice a year.
<b>Do you work closely with other specialties?</b>
There are a number of Joint clinics that run in our department that ensure the close clinical and research collaboration between Allergy and various other specialties: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Joint Allergy and Gastroenterology clinics</li> <li>2) Joint Allergy and Respiratory clinics</li> <li>3) Joint Allergy and Dermatology clinics</li> <li>4) Joint Allergy and ENT clinics.</li> </ol>

**In what ways is your job satisfying?**

There is a lot you can do for atopic children to improve their quality of life. I found working in a field with close links between academia and clinicians stimulating and exciting. In allergy you work closely with the nurses and dieticians and thus have a multidisciplinary approach which is very rewarding.

**What are the possibilities for your future career progression?**

In training to be a Paediatric Allergist and Clinical Immunologist you still train as a General Paediatrician, thus it is possible that you could do a variety of Consultant positions. I am in academia thus I could go for a Senior Lecturer position or Tertiary paediatric Allergist position. However I could still be a General Paediatrician with an interest in Allergy if I chose to do this.

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

My clinical working hours whilst in training are the usual 9am-5pm with general paediatric on calls. However as a consultant I may or may not have to cover general paediatrics. Given my academic slant this does take up a lot more time but is very flexible so I can usually go to any training day I wish to attend and then catch up on research work on other days. Thus I would say that they can certainly be sociable and family friendly however research can be all consuming!

**How much annual leave do you get?**

34 days per year.

**Are there opportunities for travel?**

Yes and travel grants that can be applied for.

**Are there opportunities for teaching or lecturing?**

Yes. In fact as a Clinical Lecturer I am expected to do a wide range of undergraduate, clinical and post-graduate paediatric and allergy teaching. In addition I do allergy workshops for parents, allied health professionals and other medical specialties.

**Are there opportunities for research?**

Absolutely. In my position 50% of my time is dedicated to research and teaching. However as a GRID trainee you are also expected to perform research and publish in your field.

**What changes have you seen in your specialty (clinical/technological/training/patient groups)?**

Research has already provided big opportunities in allergy such as immunotherapy for hay-fever which is now readily available in clinical practice. Management of asthma and eczema has also significantly improved due to research in this field. In the next 5-10 years we will hopefully be able to offer desensitisation to foods in food allergy and we are already evaluating prevention of food allergy by early introduction of allergenic foods.

**What is the required mix of skills for this specialty?**

Good interpersonal skills. A thirst for knowledge. Comprehensive assessment of the patient due to the multisystem approach in allergy. Enjoy working in teams. Enjoy doing out-patients as this is the majority of your work as well as challenges.

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

I work closely with nurses and dieticians in the 'one-stop shop' clinics that we run. We also have close links with charities and patient groups that help allergic patients and their parents.

**Do you establish long term relationships with your patients?**

Yes as you often follow-up children for resolution of their food allergy, especially if they have asthma and food allergy. I have numerous patients who I have seen grow up over the last 4 years and this is very satisfying to see.

**Are there typical patient groups? What are they like?**

Most children that I see have immediate or delayed food allergies, eczema, and may have asthma and

<p>hay-fever. More rarely they may have venom, drug allergy or chronic urticaria. The children range from about 2 months until 18 years (we do an adolescent clinic).</p>
<p><b>Does your job involve decision making?</b></p>
<p>Yes. We decide how to investigate and treat all patients for a wide variety of conditions. I often discuss dietary issues with the dietician so there is a lot of joint decision making also.</p>
<p><b>What are the best aspects of working in your specialty?</b></p>
<p>Holistic child-friendly approach. Multidisciplinary team working. Links with academia. Friendly, open minded and evidence based colleagues.</p>
<p><b>What are the main challenges of working in your specialty?</b></p>
<p>As I work in academia I would say that getting grants is the most challenging aspect.</p>
<p><b>How competitive have you found working in your specialty?</b></p>
<p>Research is very competitive but also there is a lot of collaborative work. Obtaining the Paediatric Allergy GRID position was very competitive but once in post people are not very competitive with each other. We all work together for the benefit of the patient.</p>
<p><b>What are the common misconceptions about working in your specialty?</b></p>
<p>That the patients you see with allergies are all 'mad'. This is not true. Most have been fobbed off by their GP when their child has genuine allergies (although there are exceptions to the rule).</p>
<p><b>Is there a typical location for working in your specialty? E.g. teaching hospitals, community? Rural? City?</b></p>
<p>Paediatric Allergy GRID training is very much as tertiary specialty due to the challenge and immunotherapy service provision that should have access to a paediatric intensive care unit. However allergy clinics are run in many secondary care hospital and simple allergy can be managed in primary care.</p>
<p><b>What other jobs, roles, societies, publications, charities and working parties have you been involved in?</b></p>
<p>I have been the Trainee Representative for the British Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology for the last 2 years. I also set-up a Food allergy Interest Group to promote translational research in Food allergy in our research department. I have led the home food introduction and assisted in the supervised feed clinic service development of our allergy service. I have also published articles in the field of allergy and am in my penultimate PhD year. I have assisted in guideline development for the World Allergy Organisation cow's milk allergy guideline and for local guidelines and audit in venom and nut allergy. I have worked with Action Against Allergy charity running work-shops at the Allergy Show for the last 3 years.</p>
<p><b>What are your broader interests and pursuits?</b></p>
<p>I enjoy travelling and sport. I enjoy my research too which is good as I spend a lot of time on it!</p>
<p><b>What advice would you give to someone considering a career in your specialty?</b></p>
<p>You need to enjoy doing paediatrics first, then enjoy managing chronic conditions in an outpatient setting. I would recommend speaking to people in the paediatric allergy field, observing allergy clinics and getting to one of the Allergy Academy allergy courses to see if you enjoy it.</p>
<p><b>If you are a consultant what would you like to see in your junior doctors? (Skill sets, decision making skills, etc.)</b></p>
<p>I would like to see initiative, diligence and a thorough approach. What is also particularly important is finishing what you have started.</p>
<p><b>What makes being a physician better than being a surgeon, GP or other career?</b></p>
<p>I enjoy talking to my patients and building a rapport (less likely in surgery). In paediatric allergy you are a specialist this has a niche body of information but also you are not confined to one organ system. AS a GP you need to know a little about everything and that can be very difficult.</p>

**Day in the life of.....**

My typical day would be a 9am start for clinic which runs till 1pm. I would see between 6-8 patients and spend about 30 minutes with each patient. In between patients I will be authorising clinic letters and responding to patient queries. I am likely to recruit a patient to one of my or somebody else's research project during clinic. We then have a lunch time meeting to discuss patients and have presentations from one of our team or a pharmaceutical company which sponsors lunch. I then go to the lab and either process the blood samples sent across or work on research admin/grant writing/report writing/data analysis. I spend quite a lot of time on paperwork for research. I go home between 5-8pm depending on what I would like to do as I can always continue working from home on my research projects.

Other days may consist of giving lectures or attending courses, meeting with people in the lab to help with the research I am doing or with collaborators. I also cover A&E from 5-9pm once every 2-3 weeks and cover the paediatric ward 3 weekends every 6 months (part-time general paediatric on calls).

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