

A Day in the Life of an Allergy, Clinical and Laboratory Immunology Registrar



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What does a typical week look like?

My week is a mix of outpatient clinics, laboratory exposure, and academic work. As a full-time trainee, I usually attend around 5-6 specialist clinics. These can include immunodeficiency clinics (both adult and paediatric) and a wide range of allergy clinics- such as venom, drug, food, and aeroallergy (including immunotherapy), as well as chronic spontaneous urticaria and connective tissue disease clinics. Depending on the centre, there may also be joint clinics with specialties like respiratory medicine, ENT, or HIV services.

In clinics, I assess complex patients and follow them up longitudinally. Alongside this, I spend time interpreting immunological investigations, discussing cases with other specialties, and attending multidisciplinary team meetings.

I am also actively involved in teaching medical students at the University of Oxford and contribute to educational and mentorship activities. Alongside clinical work, I try to balance audit, research, and projects that align with my interests.

What attracted you to allergy and immunology?

I was drawn to the specialty because of its unique combination of clinical medicine and laboratory science. It requires strong diagnostic reasoning and offers the opportunity to manage complex, multi-system conditions, particularly in patients with multimorbidity.

I still remember one of my early exposures to immunology (during an attachment!), looking down a microscope at brightly fluorescent, almost neon-coloured cells. There was something fascinating about how these intricate laboratory patterns translated into real clinical decisions. That moment really stayed with me and sparked my interest in the field.

I find it especially rewarding to navigate these complexities. I also value the continuity of care and the ability to make a meaningful, long-term difference in patients' lives. The field is rapidly evolving, with significant advancements in diagnostics and therapeutics, which keeps it intellectually stimulating.

Equally important to me is the team dynamic; immunology is a close-knit specialty, and I've found it to be one of the kindest and most supportive environments across medical specialties. It's also a field where you can build lasting relationships with colleagues and settle into a team over several years, which is something I really value.

How do you get into the specialty?

Entry into the specialty is typically via Internal Medicine Training (IMT), followed by application to specialty training at ST3 level. Although only two years of IMT are required, I completed IMT3 as well, and found the additional experience as a medical registrar particularly valuable in building confidence and clinical decision-making skills.

I was fortunate that during both my IMT1 and IMT2 years, the centres I trained in had established immunology services. The teams were very approachable, which made it easy to arrange taster weeks. They also provided me with opportunities to get involved in audits, attend specialist clinics, and participate in conferences, all of which helped build my interest and portfolio.

Developing early exposure to the specialty is helpful-whether through taster weeks, audits, teaching, or research. Demonstrating commitment and interest to the specialty, is key when applying.

What was it like starting out?

Everyone told me before I started that immunology comes with a steep learning curve, and they were absolutely right. Starting out was both exciting and challenging, as the specialty introduces a new level of complexity, particularly in understanding laboratory diagnostics and immune pathways.

What makes the transition easier, however, is the level of support. It is a highly supervised specialty, and consultants are always approachable and willing to help. It's also quite unique in that you transition back to being one of the more junior members of the team, but you're surrounded by people who are incredibly knowledgeable and supportive. The specialist nurses, in particular, are an invaluable resource-they are often experts in managing patient queries and navigating care pathways.

Another really reassuring aspect is that, as it is a small specialty, many of the training days are held nationally. This gives you the opportunity to meet other trainees and realise you're not alone in finding things challenging at the start. You often end up forming strong friendships with people who are in the same position as you. The more senior trainees are incredibly supportive as well, they are always willing to help (literally sometimes a phone call/text message away!) and often take you under their wing.

Although it can feel overwhelming at the beginning, things start to come together with time, and you begin to develop a clearer understanding of how everything fits, gaining confidence in both the clinical and laboratory aspects of the specialty.

Who do allergy and clinical immunology registrars work with?

We work within a highly multidisciplinary environment. This includes immunology and allergy consultants, specialist nurses, pharmacists, clinical scientists and consultant scientists, as well as laboratory managers and quality officers.

We also work closely with colleagues from a range of other specialties, including respiratory medicine, dermatology, rheumatology, haematology, and infectious diseases. There is significant

collaboration with primary care as well, particularly in coordinating investigations and ongoing patient management.

In addition, immunology is a relatively small specialty, so there is a strong sense of a national network. We often work with immunologists across the country through national MDTs, where complex cases are discussed and shared learning takes place.

What makes the specialty family friendly?

One of the lovely things about the specialty is that it's largely outpatient-based, with predictable 9–5 working hours and very few acute emergencies. It's one of the rare corners of medicine where you can usually plan your evenings and weekends!

This makes it much easier to maintain a healthy work–life balance, spend time with family and friends, and still have the flexibility to pursue academic interests, teaching, or simply switch off after work. The consultants are also usually very supportive of less than full time work.

What are the research and teaching opportunities?

There are fantastic opportunities to get involved in both clinical and laboratory-based research within the specialty. Even though I am only about a year and a half into my training, I've been fortunate to take part in a variety of academic activities that have really helped me develop my interests.

During ST3 and ST4, I was able to present posters and an oral presentation at the British Society for Immunology (BSI) conferences. I also received a travel scholarship to attend FOCIS in the US (although I couldn't take this up). Along the way, I've contributed to publications and had the opportunity to be part of a BSI guideline writing group. More recently, I've secured a grant to support an audit project that I'm particularly passionate about, which I'm really looking forward to developing further.

My interests extend beyond clinical immunology into medical education, public health, and health policy—particularly in understanding the upstream factors that influence health outcomes and disparities in access to care.

Teaching is a big part of what I enjoy. I'm currently an Immunology tutor for Year 4 and 5 medical students at the University of Oxford. Outside of work, I also mentor Palestinian medical students through the OxPal charity, which has been a very meaningful and grounding experience.

What do you enjoy most about the job?

About six months into starting, my supervisor asked me, “Do you feel like you've found your home in this specialty?”—and I genuinely do.

I love the intellectual challenge of navigating complex, often puzzling conditions and slowly piecing things together. But just as importantly, I really value the continuity—getting to know patients over time and seeing tangible improvements in their health.

And honestly, one of the best parts has been the people. Immunology has some of the kindest, most supportive colleagues I've come across, which makes coming to work genuinely enjoyable.

What advice would you give to resident doctors considering the specialty?

If you're someone who enjoys solving complex problems, sitting with uncertainty, and working (9-5 with no oncalls) in small, close-knit teams- this is a really special field.

It's also a great fit if you're academically inclined or interested in research or education. That said, it's worth being aware of a few realities—pay progression can be slower compared to some other pathways (no on call banding), and at times you might be the only trainee in a centre, which can feel a bit isolating if you're used to or prefer larger teams.

My advice would be: explore it early. Go to clinics, arrange taster weeks, get involved in projects. Don't worry if it feels overwhelming at first, immunology is one of those specialties that gradually clicks with time. BSACI offers a medical scholarship to attend its conference, which is a great opportunity.

And most importantly, find your people. Mentors, peers, seniors; this is a small specialty, and the relationships you build will shape your experience in the best possible way.