

An elective in Jamaica

For my elective I spent six weeks in Kingston Jamaica at the University Hospital of the West Indies, a large regional teaching hospital. I spent most of my time during the six weeks working in the Chemical Pathology department contributing to routine laboratory work. My ambition was to observe how chemical pathology services are managed and delivered in a setting with limited resources and funding and to try to find applications for similar practices here in Leicester.

The laboratory had one automated analyser, a Roche Cobas 6000, on which the majority of tests within the laboratory were performed. All immunoassay tests (excluding Troponin I) were batched whilst all chemistry tests were run 24 hours a day. The laboratory also performed a range of manual tests including urinalysis by microscopy, VMA and urine protein measurement by spectrophotometry and electrophoresis for oligoclonal bands. In total the laboratory processed roughly 200 samples per day primarily from patients within the hospital as well as samples from a small number of patients of private practitioners.

In recent years, the laboratory at University Hospital of the West Indies has been working towards gaining accreditation. During my elective I was asked to audit the pre-examination error rates and patterns over the previous three years for the laboratory. The laboratory has become much stricter with its sample acceptance criteria in light of gaining accreditation and the results of the audit, which the laboratory are planning to publish, reflected this. In addition I was able to contribute to multidisciplinary meetings by presenting on audits, quality, IQC and proficiency testing.

Whilst working at the University Hospital of the West Indies I was also able to spend a couple of days in the Clinical Microbiology, Haematology and Surgical Pathology departments. I also visited a privately funded laboratory in Kingston which was very different to the laboratory I was based at.