

Elective Placement Summary

I carried out my elective placement working as part of an academic clinical research group at Imperial College. The Clinical Biochemistry department at the Imperial College Hospitals had previous links with some academic research groups at Imperial College, as part of the Imperial College Academic Health Science Network (AHSN), but placements of this type had not been completed previously.

When choosing an elective placement I was looking for a project that would not only give me experience in a different area, but that would also lead to a useful outcome for the group I joined. I also hoped to foster better links between the NHS service and research arms of the AHSN.

With the support of my training officer I contacted Prof. Waljit Dhillon, an Endocrinologist at Imperial College, to enquire whether an elective placement would be appropriate. After agreeing that this would be feasible, we discussed possible projects for my placement over the course of the next few months, and negotiated a convenient time for the 6 week block, taking into account the constraints of the STP timetable, and the timing of the academic blocks. I also completed an NIHR Good Clinical Practice course, which is a prerequisite for working on clinical trials.

During my 6 week elective placement I worked as part of a multidisciplinary team, comprising professors, consultants, research fellows, registrars, specialist research nurses, foundation year doctors, research students, and laboratory staff. I participated in a range of activities, including recruitment of patients for clinical trials, research studies on a patient with Kallman syndrome, observation of and assistance with study visits for an ongoing clinical trial, analysis of samples from a previous clinical trial, interpretation of study data, and participation in fortnightly research group meetings.

I enjoyed my elective placement, and also found it very educational and of benefit for my ongoing scientific development. Having previously carried out substantial research projects in laboratory-based science it was useful to contrast my previous experience with the very different focus of clinical research, and how clinical research is managed and performed. Particularly significant was the importance of ethics applications and thorough record-keeping, which are essential for any clinical research. Having the opportunity to meet and interact with patients was also very beneficial. This has helped me to appreciate the patient's perspective more, which is vital for my future career in healthcare science.