NHS
East Lancashire Hospitals
NHS Trust

Pathology Careers

Safe | Personal | Effective

Contents

Introduction

Pathology is the study of disease, its causes and progression. Nearly every patient in the NHS has had dealings with pathology services at some point. Every time you give a blood, stool, urine or tissue sample, it is analysed by a pathologist or pathology scientist, known as a biomedical or clinical scientist, depending on their skills and qualifications.

There are many different specialist areas in pathology, such as forensic pathology, which looks at the causes of death. The four main specialties in pathology are:

- chemical pathology – the study of chemicals in the blood and other fluids
- haematology – the study of disorders of the blood
- histopathology – the study of disease in human tissue
- medical microbiology – the study of infection

There are several different professions career pathways within Pathology, each with their own specific entry requirements. This information booklet aims to give you an overview of those different professions including a summary of entry requirements and potential salary.

Phlebotomist

Job Summary

Phlebotomists are responsible for performing venepuncture (taking blood from veins) and veneole (from capillaries). The blood collection procedure involves piercing or puncturing the veins with a needle, or slicing of veneoles. These are both invasive, clinic procedures. The blood extracted needs to be suitable for analytical and diagnostic testing in the laboratory. The job requires a high level of tolerance to repetitive work, whilst maintaining accuracy, attention to detail, and patient safety. Phlebotomists can work on wards and/or in clinics, and are often responsible for managing their own workload.

Typical Entry Requirements

- GCSE English and Maths
- A recognised phlebotomy certificate is desirable, however training is often delivered on the job and the trainee will be expected to gain a phlebotomy certificate once in employment
- A first aid qualification is also desirable

Typical Salary

Band 2 (£18,005 - £19,337) or Band 3 (£19,737 - £21,142)

Medical Laboratory Assistant

Job Summary

Medical Laboratory Assistants (MLAs) are required to work as part of a team within the pathology laboratory, supporting Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered Biomedical Scientists. They are responsible for preparing patient samples for analysis and carrying out basic laboratory duties, for example preparing material to send to other laboratories for specialist testing. The workflow is unpredictable such that there can be significant peaks and troughs throughout the day in the number of samples arriving for processing. MLAs need a high level of tolerance to repetitive work, and they need to maintain high levels of accuracy and attention to detail throughout periods of prolonged concentration.

Typical Entry Requirements

- 2 A-levels, including one science subject
- Possession of, or willingness to work towards, NVQ qualifications (Clinical Laboratory Support), or equivalent

Typical Salary

Band 3 (£19,737 - £21,142)

Potential Career Development

The opportunity to complete the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS) Certificate of Achievement, Level I and Level II. This would qualify the MLA to work as an Associate Practitioner.

Cytoscreener

Job Summary

As well as rotating through all areas of the cytology laboratory, cytoscreeners are responsible for analysing 'smear' samples taken as part of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme (NHSCSP). They screen and, in some instances, report cytology specimens, referring equivocal and abnormal cases to more senior colleagues. Their role may also include preparation and staining of the cytology samples ready for screening. Cytoscreeners are required to participate in both internal and external quality assurance programmes. They are also required to maintain their own competence by screening at least 3000 cervical cytology slides each year, attending an update course every 3 years, and maintaining an NHSCSP reporting profile.

Typical Entry Requirements

- 5 GCSE's, grade C or above
- NHSCSP Certificate in Cervical Screening, or a City and Guilds Diploma in Cervical Cytology

Typical Salary

Band 4 (£21,892 - £24,157)

Anatomical Pathology Technician

Job Summary

Anatomical Pathology Technicians (APTs) provide assistance to Pathologists in conducting post mortem examinations. The duties of an APT can include the following:

- Day-to-day running of the mortuary service, including administration and record-keeping
- The preparation of bodies for post mortem examination, including the preparation and evisceration if bodies in line with HM Coroner's authority, or Next of Kin's consent. This also includes any subsequent reconstruction
- Assisting Home Office pathologists, Police Officers and other forensic services at autopsies on suspicious deaths
- Taking responsibility for the control of organs and tissues retained for histopathological examination; ensuring that they are retained in a sensitive and dignified manner, and in line with relevant legislation
- Conducting sensitive disposal of tissues and organs including 'termination of pregnancy' and 'products of conception', according to departmental procedures and consent from relatives
- Presentation of the deceased for viewing or identification purposes in a respectful and dignified manner
- To provide a polite and sensitive service while dealing with the bereaved, and offering advice and support

Typical Entry Requirements

- GCSE in English, Maths and Science to enter employment as a trainee APT
- Willingness to study towards the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) Diploma in Anatomical Pathology Technology (Level 3)

Typical Salary

Trainee APT – Band 3 (£19,737 - £21,142)

Posts at more senior levels – Band 4 or Band 5 (£21,892 - £30,615)

Potential Career Development

- Membership of the Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology (AAPT)
- RSPH Diploma in Anatomical Pathology Technology (Level 4)
- Mortuary Management

Associate Practitioner

Job Summary

Associate Practitioners provide professional support to Biomedical Scientists and other staff within the Pathology Laboratory. Their duties include carrying out laboratory analyses relevant to their discipline, including maintaining appropriate records and documentation. Associate Practitioners undertake quality control procedures and examine quality control results to assess performance, and report these results back to Biomedical Scientist colleagues. They are also expected to participate in the operation, routine maintenance and troubleshooting of laboratory equipment as necessary, and assist in the supervision and training of junior staff. Finally, they must ensure that safe working practices are followed, in accordance with departmental Health and Safety policies.

Typical Entry Requirements

- Foundation degree in Healthcare Science or equivalent, or
- Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS) Biomedical Support Staff Certificate of Achievement Part II

Typical Salary

Band 4 (£21,892 - £24,157)

Potential Career Development

The opportunity to complete an accredited undergraduate (BSc) degree in either Biomedical Science or Healthcare Science, and complete the IBMS Registration Portfolio. This would allow registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), and qualify the Associate Practitioner to work as a Biomedical Scientist.

Biomedical Scientist

Job Summary

Biomedical Scientists work as a team to carry out a range of laboratory and scientific tests on tissues and fluids to help clinicians diagnose and treat diseases. Their main responsibility is to perform routine and specialist analytical testing on a range of biological samples. Biomedical Scientists give test results to medical staff, who will use the information to diagnose and treat the patient's illness. It is important for patient samples to be processed in good time, prioritising urgent requests as necessary, to ensure that turnaround times for reporting results are achieved. All Biomedical Scientists are expected to run, maintain and troubleshoot specialist laboratory equipment, support the laboratory quality management system, and observe all local policies and legislation relevant to their role. They are also expected to keep their professional knowledge up to date and have knowledge of diagnostic innovations; this is important for continual professional development and to maintain professional registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Finally, all Biomedical Scientists are expected to supervise, mentor and support trainee Biomedical Scientists and other support staff.

Typical Entry Requirements

- BSc in Biomedical Science or Healthcare Science, **accredited by the IBMS**

- Completion of the IBMS Registration Portfolio – fulfils the requirement s to register with the HCPC as a Biomedical Scientist

Typical Salary

Starting salary – Band 5 (£24,907 - £30,615)

With experience/completion of extra qualifications – Band 6 (£31,365 - £37,890)

As a Senior Biomedical Scientist – Band 7 (£38,890 - £44,503)

Laboratory Manager – Band 8a (£45,753 - £51,668)

Potential Career Development

- IBMS Specialist Portfolio (specialise in your chosen discipline)
- IBMS Higher Specialist Diploma
- MSc Biomedical Science

Clinical Scientist

Job Summary

The clinical scientist role is available within some, but not all, disciplines within Pathology. Clinical Scientists research and develop techniques and equipment to help prevent, diagnose and treat illness. They are required to carry out complex scientific and clinical roles, including those working directly with patients. Clinical Scientists analyse, interpret and compare investigative and clinical options. They make judgements, including clinical and differential judgements, involving complicated facts or situations that impact on patients. They initiate and undertake innovation, improvement and research and development, and they are involved in the education of healthcare science trainees and other learners in the workplace.

Typical Entry Requirements

- Undergraduate degree in Biomedical Science (or similar)
- To have completed the 3 year NHS Healthcare Scientist Training Programme (STP)
- Registration as a Clinical Scientist with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Typical Salary

In training – Band 6 (£31,365 - £37,890)

Qualified – typically Band 7 (£38,890 - £44,503)

Information

Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC)

http://www.hcpc-uk.co.uk

Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS)

https://www.ibms.org/home

IBMS Accredited Degree Programmes: https://careers.ibms.org/students/accredited-degree-courses/undergraduate-uk-courses

IBMS Qualifications: https://www.ibms.org/education

NHS Cervical Screening Programme (NHSCSP)

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cervical-screening-education-and-training#cervical-cytology-training

Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology (AAPT)

http://www.aaptuk.org/

Scientist Training Programme

http://www.nshcs.hee.nhs.uk/join-programme/nhs-scientist-training-programme

NHS Pay Scales

Based on 3 year implementation of Agenda for Change Payscales: 2018-2021

https://nursingnotes.co.uk/nhs-agenda-change-pay-scales-2018-2019/

This information booklet was compiled by Kathleen Wilkie,

Pathology Quality & Training Manager for ELHT

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kathleen.wilkie@elht.nhs.uk

Please contact for digital copies or information