

INSPIRE Scheme Round 4 Case Studies

School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, University of Aberdeen

Case Study 1: INSPIRE Career Evening Event hosted by the Aberdeen Student Society for Academic Medicine (ASSAM)

INSPIRE 4 activities included student association (ASSAM) led events throughout the year. One of these activities was an academic careers evening, the aim of which was to raise the profile of academic medicine and stimulate the interest in clinical academia amongst our medical students. This is one of the very well attended events and comprised of a series of inspirational talks given by prominent academic clinicians to help inform medical students of career options. Talks were given by Professor Mamas Mamas from Keele University as external keynote speaker and six other clinical academics from Aberdeen covering a range of clinical specialties including haematology, orthopaedics, dentistry and surgery. They shared career paths, research interests and advice for future aspiring clinical academics. The presentations were followed by a networking event which allowed students to informally meet with speakers.

Andra Stefan, a 1st year medical student who attended the event said:

“I attended ASSAM’s Academic Careers Evening last February, during my first year of medical school. Having graduated with a degree in Natural Sciences and undertaken several research projects before studying medicine, a career as a clinical academic had been something I seriously considered. One aspect of the event that I particularly liked is that the speakers came from very different professional backgrounds. We were provided with valuable information on academic career paths in various specialties ranging from haematology and gastroenterology to neurosurgery and dentistry. This expanded my horizons regarding potential specialization areas that I could pursue in the future. I also appreciated the fact that the speakers shared with us the challenges that they had encountered throughout their careers ensuring that we get a realistic perspective on what it is like to work in medical research as a doctor. Overall, this event reinforced my intention to pursue clinical academia”.

Andra subsequently became a member of the Aberdeen Student Society for Academic Medicine and is currently planning future events. She also applied for the Aberdeen Summer Research Scholarship Programme (ASRS) in 2020 and was successful but unable to carry out summer research due to COVID-19. She hopes to carry out a summer research project during the summer of 2021 after her year 2 exams.



Academic Career Evening 2019

Case study 2: INSPIRE International Summer Research Scholarships

One of the unique INSPIRE activities of the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition funded by the INSPIRE Round 4 was two INSPIRE International Summer Research Scholarships (one funded by INSPIRE and one matched fund from the University). The scholarship was awarded to successful candidates after CV screening and a formal interview process.

One of the recipients of this prestigious award, Tiberiu Pana, had previously successfully completed summer research scholarship projects funded internally (ASRS scholarship) after MBChB year 2 and externally (Medical Research Scotland Vacation Scholarship) after year 3. He received the INSPIRE International Scholarship in 2019 which he carried out after his MBChB year 4 exams, undertaking a research internship at the UT Southwestern Medical Center (Dallas, TX, USA).

Tiberiu has summarised his INSPIRE experience below.

“The INSPIRE International Scholarship has allowed me to spend an entire summer as a research intern at the Advanced Imaging Research Centre, UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, TX under the supervision of Dr Vlad Zaha. This opportunity has allowed me to work with a team of world-leading researchers and clinicians involved in cardiac imaging research. I was involved in a research project which aimed to quantify the degree of cardiac muscle regeneration amongst patients with end-stage heart failure by using nuclear cardiology imaging techniques. This attachment also allowed me to observe other cutting-edge cardiac imaging research projects. Furthermore, during this attachment I was able to shadow senior cardiologists whilst undertaking clinical duties and observe clinical practice in the setting of an entirely different healthcare system. I have thus had the chance to observe not only out-patient specialised cardio-oncology clinics, but also observe ward-based activities at the Parkland Hospital. I also had the opportunity to attend the weekly meetings of the UT Southwestern Medical Center Cardiology Department, where interesting clinical cases, audits and practice-changing research papers were discussed.

Finally, I had the opportunity of presenting and debating the research project that I had undertaken to an extended audience of world-leading cardiologists. As an aspiring clinical academic in the field of cardiology, I have found this experience invaluable. The research experience allowed me to develop important new transferable skills and has consolidated my intention of pursuing clinical academia in the future. Furthermore, the clinical experience acquired during this scholarship has widened my perspective on the clinical practice of cardiology.”

Tiberiu is currently enrolled in an MRes programme at the University of Aberdeen (between his 4th and 5th year of MBChB) and is well on track of a clinical academic career path.



Tiberiu presenting his work at USA at the Summer Scholarships Symposium 2019