

# TRAINEE BIOMEDICAL SCIENTISTS PRESENT: ADAPTING TO LIFE IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC



## Mental Health

NHS staff including trainee BMS, have experienced a significant change to the way in which they work. The possible exposure to COVID-19 faced by staff means that they are at higher risk of acquiring the infection. Thus, staff are encouraged to isolate from family and friends where possible.

Due to this, it is important now more than ever that staff take care of their mental health in order to reduce the risk of burn-out, anxiety or depression. Initiatives that have been developed to support NHS staff include psychological first aid training, online peer support and a telephone support line.

## Staff Shortages

In accordance with COVID-19 guidelines there is reduced staff numbers, as well as social distancing taking place within the laboratory. This means that there is less opportunity to work with experienced staff in the department but also a greater workload is placed on Trainees. To combat this issue, time is set aside each week where possible to give trainees days to study, work on their Specialist Portfolios and process new information.

To reduce occurrence of staff shortages due to spread of infection, it is essential for all staff to continue practicing social distancing and hand hygiene practices.

## Multidisciplinary Communication

Multidisciplinary working is essential as it ensures that a comprehensive, robust service can be provided to all patients. To maintain this approach all staff involved in patient care have been required to continue to engage in strong, clear communication allowing staff to adapt to the ever increasing work load.

Biomedical scientists (BMS) from multiple disciplines have been continuing to work together to ensure COVID testing can continue to be provided to the community and staff. As an example, the Alinity i analyser used in the Haematology laboratory is suitable for the analysis of COVID-19 samples. Use of these analysers for COVID testing may be implemented in the future if the workload on Virology staff becomes too high.

## Upgrade of Laboratory Automation:

Adapting to new automation is a trial to overcome but during a pandemic when there is less staff and increasing workloads this has become increasingly challenging.

To combat this, training sessions held both online and socially distanced have been made available for staff. Online resources such as user manuals and case books are also used as training tools as they provide examples which may not have been encountered otherwise.

## Change to Workload

As GP's and clinics open back up to the public, the volume of samples arriving into the laboratory increases. In addition to this, increases in the number of inpatient samples due to COVID related incidents has caused a rise in the samples received daily.

When dealing with this change of pace, it is important to ensure that as a trainee you work within your scope of practice, ensuring you speak to an appropriate staff member when out with your depth.