

## UK DCTN Registrar Fellowship 2009

I was lucky enough to win a UK DCTN Fellowship when I was an ST3. My experience has been overwhelmingly positive, enlightening and educational and this is at least in part due to the fantastic team at the UK DCTN offices in Nottingham where the whole venture is co-ordinated. They make every effort to make you feel welcome and have been incredibly supportive of all the activities Fiona (my Fellowship partner in crime) and I have undertaken in the last two years.



My first fellowship experience was to attend the BEES course. The three day course gave an excellent grounding in statistics and critical appraisal, and I still refer to my course notes frequently in my day to day work. This gave me confidence to think more deeply about published studies and not to accept information at face value. Subsequently, Fiona and I were involved in a series of teleconferences with professor Hywel Williams where we would read and deconstruct papers. One such experience led to a critique that was published in *Archives of Dermatology*.

We both sat on the UK DCTN Steering Group and Trial Prioritisation Panel and were able to see how the network is run, as well as reviewing new trial suggestions, which I am still doing. I really enjoy commenting on the research ideas and seeing which ones get taken forward. Fiona and I attended a three day visit to the Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology in Nottingham for a more in-depth look at current trials and the specific roles of everybody there (and a lovely dinner!).

In the second year of the Fellowship I wrote the Annual Evidence Update on acne with Hywel Williams and Douglas Grindlay. This was a good opportunity to put some of the skills I had learnt into practice whilst refining my expertise in time management! It was published first online and more recently as a paper in *Clinical and Experimental Dermatology*.

I think that one of the strengths of the fellowship is its flexibility. Some of my colleagues were able to become more involved with projects they already had a connection with. As I was not in this situation I was given the chance to volunteer and pursue my own interests. Several opportunities became available, the first being the chance to write a Cochrane review with Helen Nankervis, a researcher in Nottingham. We have nearly finished our piece looking at house dust mite exclusion in the treatment of eczema. This has been quite a learning curve but a fascinating insight into how these meticulously designed reviews are produced. I was also fortunate to be able to join Alison Layton and her team in Harrogate on the acne prevention study they were designing. We are now at the stage where we have a protocol for a pilot study which may lead to a larger trial in the future.

I would encourage any registrar who has the chance to apply for this award to take it. I have genuinely enjoyed every minute of it and am hugely grateful for the unique opportunity I have been given. I am pleased to be able to continue my links with the UK DCTN through involvement with the trials prioritisation panel and the acne study. I hope that in the future I will be able to continue to make useful contributions to the network that has given me such a great foundation in the world of clinical trials.