

a day in the life...

Thomas Parkers describes a day in the lab



Thomas Parkes
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It's 9.15 am; this is an early morning. At least when compared to the rest of my timetable, which features only one other pre-midday start. No this isn't a dream consultant placement, it's intercalation.

I'm sitting across from my project supervisor, using my medical communication skills to give the appearance that I know what I'm talking about as I attempt to pick apart the latest in a string of failed experiments. I'm assured that this isn't (just) because the only time I've spent in a lab before involved playing with salbutamol and lignocaine, but because all science is about 95% failure. Eventually he suggests some improvements to the model I'm using and I can withdraw to the lab to prep for another week of staring at bottles of liquid, praying that *Staph. aureus* is growing somewhere in there. Fortunately I'm well supported by lab technicians who compensate for my ignorance in basic lab technique.

The quiet of the lab gives time to indulge in some podcasts in various categories: theological (RC Sproul or John Frame maybe); scientific (Dr Phil + Naked Scientist is a classic...no real nudity

involved) and comedy (*The Now Show*...or does that make me seem middle aged and middle class?) Then with a check of the watch I realise I should probably cycle home for some food before embarking on two hours of 'Bacterial infections of man'.....one tough subject to wrap my medic brain around. Then maybe some light reading of science journals, before combining sweating and trying not to embarrass myself in a room full of guys at the university Boxing Club (don't be fooled, a five year old could probably take me in a fight).

It's been a great year. Not only can I sleep in (ie wake up at 8am not 7am), but with the right balance evenings and weekends are free zones, except when the intense stress of finals' revision hits. This has freed me up to study a few of the meatier theological topics, let me help out at CU and church, dabble in new sports (parkour and boxing anyone?) and binge on conferences, of which the CMF National Students' Conference was a highlight. Can a medic jump into the final year of a BSc, pick up all the basic science and have a good crack at research? Results will soon tell. It's not been a walk in the park, but it has been fun. ■