

Ben Hashim

Tell us a little about yourself:

I grew up in Belfast then moved to Scotland where I graduated from Dundee University medical school. I then moved south and completed my junior doctor training in east London. I am currently working as a Specialist Registrar (ST4) in the North East Thames rotation, having completed the PgDip in Endocrinology and Diabetes in Spring 2013. In addition, I am in the midst of applying for funding for a PhD research project on stem cells of adrenocortical tumours.

Why did you choose to study this course?

The main reason for enrolling was to increase my knowledge of endocrinology and diabetes in all aspects ranging from basic science and research methodologies to clinical evaluation and management. I was aware that St Bartholomew's hospital had a great reputation for a high standard of clinical endocrinology as well as having strong links with an active research unit. This gave me confidence that the content of the course would be both high quality and contemporaneous. At the time of starting the course I was working as a clinical fellow and I believed that, aside from improving my existing knowledge, the course would strengthen my chances of acquiring a national specialist registrar training number come interview.

How did you find the learning experience?

It was very enjoyable, although the work involved should not be underestimated.

I thought that there was a good deal of quality content in the form of regular online lectures, and this content was enriched and expanded on by discussion forums and other online media.

What were the highlights?

The highlights were the range of topics covered and the quality of the online lectures. I liked the way that it was entirely distance learning, which enabled me to work fulltime simultaneously. I thought that the assignments were useful and another great feature was the lively discussion forums, which really stimulated further thought.

What do you think you have gained from completing the course?

I believe that, aside from gaining a greater depth of understanding in endocrinology and diabetes, the course has also improved other fundamental skills such as assessing and evaluating the information acquired from literature searches.

How has it influenced your work or practice?

Not only has it helped in improving the clinical care that I can deliver now, but also has provided me with the tools necessary to find the evidence to answer questions that I may encounter in the future. The course has also given me information on laboratory techniques, which has helped me in my pursuit of research.

What advice would you give to a student considering this course?

I would recommend this course for those wishing to pursue a career in endocrinology, or for those with established careers wanting to refresh/update their existing knowledge. With regards to the Postgraduate Diploma/Masters qualification, I completed the PgDip without continuing to complete it as a Masters. My intention is to return at a later date to do that portion to advance the PgDip to a Masters. I think other potential students may also find the option of doing this appealing.

I suspect potential students will be working fulltime during this course (as I did). If possible, try and time it so that you are doing the course during 'a less busy' rotation/placement. The more time that you are able to devote to the course the better, as there are a number of non-compulsory activities that are beneficial. I would also recommend becoming involved in the discussion forum. With anything in life the more time, effort and care you put into it the more you get out and it is certainly true with this course. Enjoy!