Kamila Orzechowska, a second-year student at Coventry University, writes about her experiences of a research internship and advises how others can get the most out of work experience.

I have been interested in science for as long as I can remember. I have undertaken several courses around science and biology and am currently studying Biological and Chemical Sciences at Coventry University. My ultimate ambition is to translate into an accredited Institute of Biomedical Sciences (IBMS) programme, where I can advance my laboratory practice and skillset, focusing on medical microbiology.

Due to COVID-19, I found it challenging to identify a placement, but was signposted to the work of the Renal Patient Support Group (RPSG) and, over the summer, I have been building my healthcare science knowledge around kidney care and laboratory practice, developing understanding of science and research. I think it is important to be a pragmatic and resourceful scientist for healthcare practice and the RPSG has been amazing in helping me to become a rounded young scientist professional.

The RPSG was founded in 2009 with the view to provide online peer support and education for patients suffering with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) in the UK. Whilst it started with baseline mild affiliation with the North Bristol NHS Trust, it has expanded to a global membership.

The RPSG is an evidence-based support group, where patients and carers have

HOW TO... MAKE THE MOST OF AN INTERNSHIP

opportunities to share real-life experiences. I have been amazed by the fantastic team and leadership this group has. The efforts really highlight opportunity for discussions and how patients, professionals and researchers can work together to find answers to important questions, improve healthcare treatments, quality of life and life expectancy. My time has provided me with a good understanding of how biomedical sciences can be involved to support smarter care for CKD patients with probable comorbidities and multimorbidity.

Developing skillsets
This experience has helped me in developing the necessary skills to be a biomedical scientist. I am learning about lab practices, engaging with academics, researchers and wider health professionals. I am learning about new areas of care relating to kidney disease and gaining an understanding of how important involvement of healthcare scientists really is in patient care whilst contributing to frontline practice.

I have been able to increase my knowledge of kidney pathology, primary care, secondary care, different terminologies, care plans and treatments. I have also contributed to webinars and virtual conference calls under supervision.

I would like to develop my final-year

"If you are open to exploring other areas where science has a focus, then you should get the best out of your placement"

dissertation project under RPSG supervision surrounding polycystic kidney disease (PKD), and I am currently developing the proposal. Also, I would like to explore areas of medical microbiology surrounding PKD. I would like to eventually have a biomedical science career in microbiology. Together, with my internship supervisor, I am hoping to present a snapshot of my final year project in the form of a poster presentation at the IBMS Congress in 2021, and would like to get this work published in affiliation with the RPSG after my dissertation is completed. All this experience has taught me how to combine biomedical science and research.

Internship activities

Following my internship, I am looking to transfer onto an accredited IBMS programme. My internship with RPSG has involved several activities, including preparation of and participation in a webinar surrounding polypharmacy and renal biomarkers. Working on my presentation, I developed a general understanding of polypharmacy, renal insufficiency and nephrotoxicity. I also gained an understanding of risk factors for patients with CKD.

The webinar was collaborative and, with my internship supervisor, I presented insights on biomarkers to an international online audience. This helped me gain confidence, and the importance of clear communication. As part of this work, I was also invited by my internship supervisor to co-create a poster presentation titled *Polypharmacy and Nephrotoxicity: Understanding the Problem and Prompting Early Renal Screening for Best Practice – Review*. This poster communicates how to avoid excessive, inappropriate, or inadequate prescribing in the elderly population living in care and nursing homes.

My internship has motivated me to work and strive to become a well-rounded scientist and professional and to embrace the concept of "more than science in the laboratory".

I am also privileged to have helped in developing three collaborative papers, which are being prepared for publication. I am now looking to get involved in further collaborative research work.

Advice for others

Searching for a placement is a long process. It was a struggle to find work in a laboratory setting to build on my biomedical science skills. One of the best ways to search out placement opportunities is to explore different areas of healthcare where biomedical science has an important focus.

It is about connecting – writing letters and approaching people who may have links. You might not get what you originally plan for, but science, it is about being open to learning and wider opportunities.

It is important as a developing scientist to make transparent what you want. It is good to be proactive and open to learn new things and it is vital to act professionally at all times. I referred to the IBMS Good Practice guideline (2017) and that gave me a good idea of professional conduct in and outside the laboratory environment.

Searching took me in many directions, but getting the most out of your placement is about showing your understanding as part of the interview process. You want to be in a position where you can learn and develop and link that back to your undergraduate education. If you are open to exploring other areas where science has a focus, then you should get the best out of your placement. **BMS**