

MY LAB

FLEXIBLE AND RESILIENT

Patrick Simms, a Senior Biomedical Scientist in Biochemistry, gives a guided tour of the pathology labs in Weston.

Situated on the coast of south west England is the “sunny” seaside town of Weston-super-Mare. Weston is part of Somerset and has a population of approximately 70 thousand people (and rising). The south of Weston, in the little village of Uphill, is home to Weston General Hospital and my lab – Weston Pathology.

Weston General was built in 1986 and is a small local hospital specialising in acute care.

In April 2020 the independent hospital trust merged and is now part of University Hospitals Bristol and Weston Foundation NHS Trust.

On the first floor, after taking a left out of the main stairwell, on the next left turn you will find pathology. After two badge swipes, past the offices (and the all-important tearoom) you are faced with the option of entering the specimen reception and main automation lab of blood sciences, or turning right and heading down to microbiology.

Specimen reception is a buzzing hive of activity. This is the main triage point of specimens entering the laboratory, either podded or brought directly from wards and outpatients, or via courier from the many GP service users within a 12 mile radius.

Being a smaller laboratory and a small



team, all biomedical scientists in blood science have multidisciplinary training. This includes the senior staff throughout clinical biochemistry, haematology and blood transfusion.

Providing high-quality results for diagnosis, monitoring and screening of disease, 24/7 365, our team consists of well-trained, highly skilled biomedical scientists, with the ability to work efficiently and effectively as a team and completely autonomously during the unsocial hours. Due to our size, our team is well integrated, which provides us with flexibility and resilience. We're a remarkable team – always willing to help each other and tackle any challenge, all whilst providing our service users with rapid accurate results to enable them to make the right clinical decisions for their patients.

In June last year, as part of the COVID-19

response, our blood sciences lab was able to validate, interface and go live with SARS-CoV-2 antibody testing within 48 hours of receiving the first assay pack. Within the first week, we had tested over 2000 members of staff.

Our “microbiolo-buddies” down the corridor are a hard working bunch, too. They provide diagnosis of sepsis, UTIs, wound infections and respiratory infections (of course) to name just a few. As a team, they expertly

process a tremendous amount of samples daily and provide culture and sensitivities of a multitude of bacterial pathogens. Their hard work and dedication provides essential diagnosis and treatment options for effective patient care. The microbiology team also works very closely with the infection control team to identify and prevent the spread of nosocomial infections. The team has risen to the incredible challenge as part of the COVID-19 response. For example, they have gone from originally referring every COVID-19 swab away for processing, to providing rapid in-house testing to allow for safe patient triage throughout the hospital.

Every member of our pathology team has a vital role in the patient care pathway and, although we are hidden away behind our secure laboratory doors, we are making a valuable contribution to the quality of care provided to our seaside town. [BMS](#)