Biology, Medicine and Health Student Blog

Blog posts by undergraduate and postgraduate students at the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health at The University of Manchester, UK.

How Manchester's PG Cert in Clinical Bioinformatics made me a better dermatologist

by andrewfbmh

Since graduating in medicine, Sreedhar Krishna has took it upon himself to expand his knowledge base wider. Firstly, he entered the Academic Foundation Programme in Edinburgh for postgraduate medical training before undertaking a master's in ***Public Health.*** *(https://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/masters/courses/list/06002/mph-public-health-web-based-learning/) Most recently, he enrolled on to the distance learning* ***PG Cert in Clinical Bioinformatics*** *(https://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/masters/courses/list/12099/pgcert-clinical-bioinformatics/#:~:text=PG%20Cert%20Clinical%20Bioinformatics,needed%20now%20more%20than%20ever.%22) at the University of Manchester. Read what he has to say about the course, and how it matched up to his other postgraduate enterprises, below…*

Why Clinical Bioinformatics?

My decision to study a PG Cert in Clinical Bioinformatics came as a result of my work as an **NHS dermatologist.** (https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/dermatology) Increasingly, I was encountering genetic test results that I needed to understand fully for the welfare of my patients and felt like my knowledge in genomics was somewhat lacking. I felt that having a deeper understanding of clinical bioinformatics would be helpful and given that it was not covered during my undergraduate degree at all, I was keen to undertake further study.

As a medicine graduate, we were instructed in basic science during our pre-clinical studies which was a helpful building block for the PG Cert,

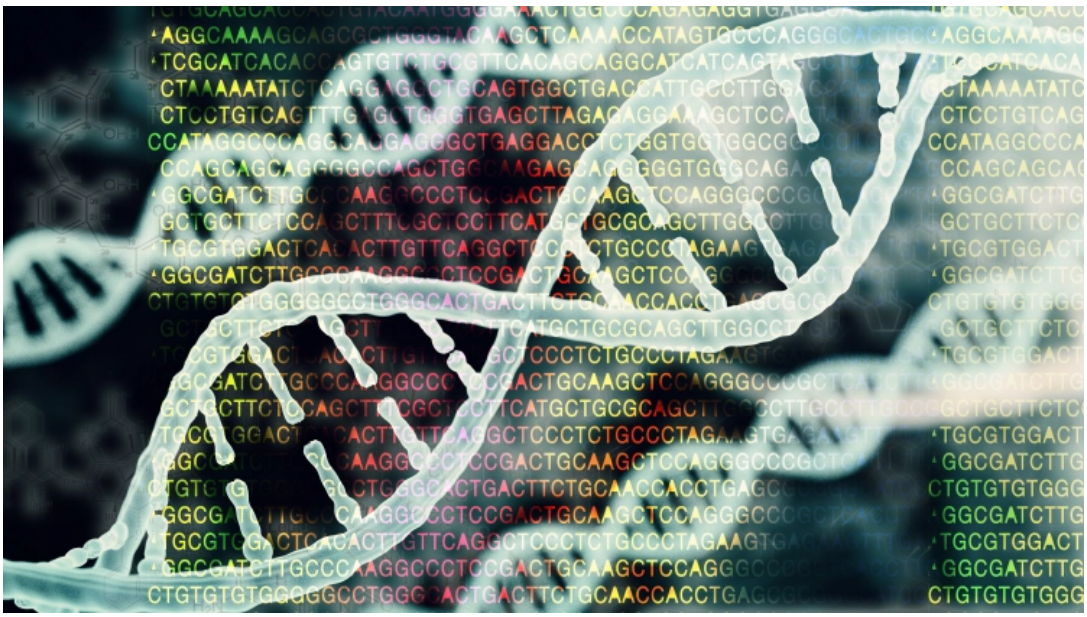
however, while we were taught about genetics, we did not receive any formal teaching in clinical bioinformatics

Why the PG Cert at Manchester?

With the decision made to further my knowledge in clincal bioinformatics the next decision was to pick where and how to study it. The nature of my work means that my schedule is somewhat unpredictable. The PG Cert offered by Manchester is the first university in the world to offer a fully online course in bioinformatics. I did some research on the faculty directing the course – not only are they eminent in their field, they actively engage prospective students by means of webinars/open days. I felt that if the faculty were so invested in the course, I would receive high quality instruction – I was not disappointed!

Course highlights

As a clinician who is just about computer-literate, I had minimal knowledge of programming. There is one module devoted to introducing participants to programming and it was great for me personally as it does not assume any prior knowledge and was therefore perfect for a novice such as myself. The course is designed in a collegial manner, where more experienced students help those who are less familiar. The learning environment is supported by faculty who are accessible and help keep you on track. I also really enjoyed the group projects and have even made some friendships that will last beyond the course.



Distance learning

I have completed a number of degrees by distance learning but I can confidently say that my experience on this course has been the most rewarding of all. From the enrolment process, administrative support, faculty queries, virtual learning environment, all the way through to submitting assignments, the experience has been great.

The faculty have been engaging, accessible and, while the course has challenged me, I have never felt lost without anyone to turn to.

Post Pg Cert life

I am working as a consultant dermatologist within the NHS. The course has made me much more confident in interpreting and applying genetic test results. I am also an honorary clinical fellow in dermatopathology where I examine tissue that we have cut out in order to give patients formal diagnoses.

As a dermatologist, I see patients in an outpatient clinic to diagnose and treat rashes. I do specific skin cancer clinics where we rapidly diagnose and remove lesions. We also provide an inpatient consultation service to help any patients who have been admitted to the hospital with skin disease.

As a dermatopathologist, I look at skin biopsy samples to help secure a diagnosis for the referring clinician. The clinical knowledge of knowing what a particular rash looks like, coupled with the skin slide helps me make the diagnosis in more complex cases.

The future

Similar to most specialities within the NHS, the demand for services far outstrips our ability to see patients. Consequently, patients experience lengthy delays to being seen. There are many dermatologists who are keen to provide an extended service to the NHS (e.g. evenings and weekends). With this in mind, I am developing an **online dermatology portal (https://skindoc.app/)** which will enable NHS patients to book an appointment with a consultant dermatologist, have a video consultation using their smartphone, and be prescribed medication – all without leaving their sofa!

Advice to prospective clinical bioinformatics students

1. Make sure you build enough time into your schedule to complete the week's work.
2. Help your colleagues via the discussion boards – you'll learn more by helping and they'll likely help you out too – everyone wins!

3. Don’t be scared to reach out to the faculty if you reach a sticking point that you can’t work through. Part of the learning experience is engaging deeply with the material (and sometimes being frustrated!) If you reach this point, don’t suffer in silence – the faculty provide timely support and never make you feel silly for asking.

Good luck!

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2 thoughts on “How Manchester’s PG Cert in Clinical Bioinformatics made me a better dermatologist”

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