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Specialist Interest: Imaging

I was only relatively recently appointed as a Consultant (beginning of 2012), having trained both abroad in Germany as well as in the UK. All my undergraduate training as well as the first couple of years of postgraduate training were done at the University of Heidelberg and at the Charité in Berlin. There, I also did my first degree – an MD in experimental heart failure, looking at the regulation and effect of the natriuretic peptides in a rat and mouse model of high-output heart failure. Apart from learning how to measure physiological parameters in vivo and in vitro, I also learned how to use echocardiography to visualise the heart and measure cardiac function – the first experience of imaging that made me curious to learn more about this subspecialty in Cardiology.

Training in Germany is quite different from that in the UK, and working on my MD meant working mostly on the weekends and in the evenings after a busy day at University and later on in the wards. I was lucky enough though to gain a fellowship at the prestigious Max-Delbrueck Centre for Molecular Medicine in Berlin which enabled me to finish my MD and take the work a little further, briefly dipping into gene therapy in heart failure.

Meeting my future British husband-to-be who did his PhD in Berlin, we decided to leave Germany and move to the UK. There, I decided to continue doing research and matriculated for a DPhil at the University of Oxford, looking at human cardiac high-energy phosphate metabolism in various forms of heart disease. This meant I had the opportunity to learn how to use cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which made me even more curious about imaging in general. After finishing my DPhil, I went back to clinical training as I missed life as a doctor in the clinical setting. It was immediately clear to me that my subspecialty would be Imaging. I trained in transthoracic, transoesophageal and stress echocardiography, and continued to work in cardiac MRI. My last year of training was spent in a Multimodality Imaging Fellowship which was set up at the University of Southampton, and I was the first fellow to be appointed for this. I learned how to use Cardiac CT in Southampton and at the Harefield Hospital, and continued to improve my echo skills.

My work as a Consultant involves daily work on CCU and on the wards, looking after all Cardiology patients, as well as running my weekly stress echo, MRI and CT lists and doing a few outpatient clinics, too. Working in a big DGH (Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust in Basingstoke and Winchester) means a lot of hands-on in all imaging modalities, making my week rather busy, but which I enjoy a lot and which gives me the chance to teach my trainees and my technicians. I am about to set up a fellowship in multimodality imaging at my workplace which would enable a trainee in their last year – or at post CCT level – to consolidate their imaging skills and knowledge.

Despite all of my work-related activity I also try and devote as much time as I can to being a hands-on mum. My children are 13 and 10 and life involves shuttling around a plethora of extra-curricular activities as well as assisting in homework and generally sorting out the complicated lives of the children. At home I am most often to be found in the kitchen baking or at the computer preparing various presentations. Juggling these two facets of my life make for a very demanding but very rich experience.