

Dr Paul Scott

A Month in the Life of RIPL

Summary

For my elective, I visited the Rare and Imported Pathogens Laboratory (RIPL) to learn about the available assays and how clinically relevant results are interpreted. In addition to this, I wanted to learn about the procedures used for major outbreaks and was fortunate enough to have first hand experience of such a response (Zika Virus).

Although RIPL deals with very different pathogens to other laboratories, many operating procedures and administrative elements were very similar. However, there were some instances of differences in procedures or requirements for expediting our samples in such a way to ensure they are processed efficiently and safely.

Overall, the experience has increased my awareness of the need to tailor the working practices to the range of tests being offered, as high-risk pathogens have very different processing requirements in order to reduce risk and ensure the correct results are reported. I have also identified areas for improvement at my local laboratory. Finally, I have identified components of my elective that will influence my professional practice as a Clinical Scientist, such as the need to link quality to fitness for purpose and to always consider any assay results in conjunction with appropriate clinical patient information. I also gained a valuable insight into the testing and reporting of rarely encountered infectious agents, to allow me to be vigilant in my future role.