Microbiologist, clinical

Job description
Clinical microbiologists study the microorganisms that cause illness in humans and animals; they identify bacterial, viral, fungal and parasitic infections, helping to prevent epidemics. They work in diagnostic laboratories and pathology departments in large hospitals and medical schools and their work focuses on investigating the causes of contagious diseases and researching new treatments for infections.

Clinical microbiologists collaborate closely with health care professionals and sometimes carry out research and development projects in the areas of bacteriology, virology, mycology and parasitology, often working in collaboration with clinical or industrial colleagues.

Work activities
• Using microscopes to study the bacteria, viruses, fungi and protozoa that cause infectious disease.
• Identifying disease-causing pathogens, testing new antimicrobial medicines and devising strategies for preventing the spread of contagious illnesses.
• Supervising infection control procedures in hospitals to ensure that illnesses do not spread among patients.
• Developing strategies for preventing and controlling epidemics and other health emergencies.

Work conditions
Travel: not normally part of the working day.
Working hours: mainly 9 to 5, Monday to Friday.
Location: mainly in large towns or cities throughout the country.

Opportunities for self-employment: unlikely.

Typical employers
• Clinical microbiologists work in a variety of settings including
• Clinical diagnostic laboratories
• Pathology departments in large hospitals and medical schools
• Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) in Ireland
• Public Health Agency (PHA) in Northern Ireland.

Career development
Opportunities to develop your career in a number of ways, including clinical or laboratory research, in addition to developing a special interest.

Entry requirements and training
A degree in a relevant subject is normally required for entry.

Other relevant degree subjects
• Applied biology
• Biological sciences
• Biology
• Biomedical sciences
• Microbial sciences
• Microbiology
• Molecular biology.
Microbiologist, clinical (continued)

Specific entry requirements
Clinical Microbiologists must be medical graduates and have completed higher specialist training in accredited centres and obtained membership of the Royal College of Pathologists in London or an equivalent qualification deemed to be of equal merit.

To become a specialist in clinical microbiology students must be registered medical doctors.

Training
Continuous on-the-job training is required to learn new laboratory techniques and to keep up with IT developments, to maintain cutting edge knowledge in their specialist area.

New starters will typically be attached to a hospital and rotated through different hospital to ensure full exposure to different types of speciality.

Skills and qualities
• Insatiable curiosity and detail-oriented.
• Patience, decisiveness and meticulousness.
• Excellent analytical and problem-solving skills.
• Ability to interact and communicate effectively with a wide range of people.
• A systematic approach to tasks.
• Excellent IT skills.
• Good interpretative skills.
• Ability to work in teams.

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