

MEDIA INFORMATION

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Praise for 'outstanding' Basildon Hospital pathology technician



A sad but inevitable part of a hospital's responsibilities is caring for the deceased and their grieving relatives. The nature of their work means that mortuary staff receive little recognition, but one of the team at Basildon Hospital has won praise from a national training centre for his excellent skills and sensitivity.

Jake Smith (*pictured left*) is one of the first anatomical pathology technicians (APTs) in the country to achieve a new Royal Society for Public Health academic qualification. APTs play a vital role in assisting the pathologist carrying out post-mortems to determine the cause of death. The team at Basildon Hospital also work with the external forensic pathologist to assist the police with post-mortems.

Most of an APT's training is carried out in the workplace, and Jake joined the team at Basildon Hospital as a trainee in November 2013. He recently completed the new level 3 diploma course in anatomical pathology technology and last week (3 September) he heard from the training centre for England at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust that he has passed with flying colours.

Jake's originally planned a career as a fitness trainer, having studied sports science at college. But working as a gym instructor did not fulfil his interest in anatomy and physiology, and he asked the mortuary manager at Basildon Hospital if he could observe a post-mortem. When a trainee position came up at the hospital, he successfully applied.

Jake said: "I definitely made the right choice; this is the career I want. The course was excellent, with a high level of detail and I had good support from the trainers and my colleagues at Basildon Hospital."

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Michelle Lancaster, mortuary and bereavement service manager who runs the course at North Tees and Hartlepool, said: “Not only did Jake excel in the training, but he has shown himself to be extremely positive and motivated.”

To achieve the diploma APTs must demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of skills and topics, including human anatomy and physiology, post-mortem techniques, health and safety and legal requirements and communicating with families.

Michelle added: “Jake’s communication skills with the bereaved are particularly excellent; he shows great compassion. He also has outstanding knowledge of the essential governance procedures and regulations.”

Alison Griffith, head of nursing for clinical support services: “Our mortuary team are known for their unfailing compassion and professionalism, and from the day he joined as a trainee, Jake showed he was committed to meeting these high standards.

“We are very proud that he is one of the first APTs in the country to achieve this new qualification, and that he received such a wonderful accolade from the training centre.”

The new diploma was launched after the Department of Health decided that the unique role of APTs should be acknowledged with a specific scientific qualification.

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