

May 2019

About me

My name is Pavandeep Gill and I am currently a PGY-3 in General Pathology at the University of Calgary. Born and raised in Vancouver, I completed three years towards a Bachelor of Science majoring in Pharmacology at the University of British Columbia prior to graduating from the Vancouver-Fraser Medical Program at the University of British Columbia in 2015.

Why I chose General Pathology

I enjoy the thrill of making diagnoses and solving medical ‘mysteries’ and value having the opportunity to influence treatment and provide important prognostic information for the wide variety of patient cases I see each day. Despite being one of the oldest specialties in medicine, I appreciate how pathology remains at the heart of patient care and will continue to do so especially with new advances in fields like molecular pathology and personalized medicine. As a general pathology resident, I will be trained in surgical pathology, autopsy, cytology, hematopathology, transfusion medicine, medical microbiology, and clinical chemistry. It seems like a daunting task, but I am excited about the wide breadth of knowledge I will have gained by the end of residency and look forward to applying it in my future practice. You never experience a boring day in pathology!

I find pathology aligns well with my skillsets. I enjoy the visual nature of the specialty, the cognitive approach to diagnosis, and the ability to harness my interpersonal skills. There are numerous opportunities to interact with other pathologists, consulting clinicians, laboratory staff, and occasionally patients and their families. I also enjoy the flexibility afforded by the field to engage in activities such as research, teaching, and medical leadership.

Clinical Life

What does a typical day of clinical duties involve?

(Since we rotate through so many different areas in general pathology, it is difficult to outline our typical schedule. I have outlined a typical day on clinical chemistry and a typical week on surgical pathology for comparison.)

A typical day	
0630-1000	Most residents arrive at work between 0630h and 0730h Spend time at instrument bench with medical laboratory staff; Coffee break between 0900-0930
1000-1100	Staff rounds or Clinical Chemistry academic half-day once weekly from 1000h to 1200h
1100-1200	Spend time at instrument bench with medical laboratory staff
1200-1230	Lunch; occasionally rounds until 1300 h
1230-1500	Spend time at instrument bench with medical laboratory staff
1500-1700	Teaching with clinical chemist
1700	Residents leave work around 1700h or some stay after hours to work on presentations or finish research projects; resident on call is responsible for any Clinical Chemistry or Hematology issues that come up throughout the day

Senior Resident Profile

General Pathology – Pavandeep Gill



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Weekly Schedule at a Glance							
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
06:00							
07:00							
08:00	Responsible for various pathology tasks and after-hour work	Arrival; Fresh specimens or participate in frozen sections	Arrival; Gross specimens	Arrival; Gross rounds until 0830 h	Arrival; Sign out with staff or review slides	Arrival; Academic half day – Unknown slide rounds	If on-call, autopsies are done around 0800h
				Review slides			
09:00		Fresh specimens or participate in frozen sections	Gross specimens	Review slides	Sign out with staff or review slides	Academic half day – didactic lectures	Responsible for various pathology tasks and after-hour work
10:00							
11:00							
12:00		Lunch	Lunch and clinic-pathological correlation rounds	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
13:00		Fresh specimens or participate in frozen sections	Gross specimens	Review slides	Sign out with staff or review slides	Gross or review slides	
14:00							
15:00							
16:00		Gynecological pathology rounds			Continuing medical education rounds		
17:00		Typical departure time	Typical departure time	Typical departure time			
18:00							
19:00							
20:00							
21:00							
22:00							
23:00							
00:00							

What kinds of rotations are required in your program?

In PGY-1 we do a rotating clinical year through Surgery, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, etc. In PGY-2 we focus on general Surgical Pathology and Autopsy rotations. Through PGY-3 to PGY-5, we rotate through clinical pathology rotations (Clinical Chemistry, Hematopathology, Transfusion Medicine, and Medical Microbiology), sub-specialty

Surgical Pathology, Forensic Pathology, and Cytopathology. There is room for elective time in PGY-3 through PGY-5, where some residents may choose to do rural pathology or research blocks.

Which of your personality characteristics are particularly helpful in your field?

I strive to be approachable and collegial. Maintaining good relationships is important given how closely we work with other pathologists, clinicians, and laboratory staff. Curiosity and an enthusiasm for learning are also key characteristics to have in this field, as there is an incredible amount of information we are required to know.

What are the best aspects of your residency?

The thrill of being able to solve a challenging case is hard to beat! The diagnostic decisions pathologists make on a daily basis can have a far-reaching impact and I value the opportunity to engage in this critical aspect of patient care.

What are the most challenging aspects of your specialty?

While one day knowing the wide breadth of information, we are expected to cover during our residency is something that I look forward to, it is also one of the most challenging aspects of general pathology!

What is one question you're often asked about your decision to pursue your specialty?

"You're such a social person, why are you in pathology?"

Good interpersonal skills are an important requirement for a career in pathology. Pathologists are often consulting each other on difficult cases, discussing patient cases with clinicians, attending multidisciplinary rounds, and coordinating with medical laboratory staff. Additionally, pathologists teach medical students and residents and are often involved in medical leadership roles. We also occasionally get to interact directly with patients and their families if they would like to know more about their diagnoses.

Can you describe the transition from junior to senior resident?

Residents are considered 'seniors' in my program beginning in PGY-4. I am one month away from making that transition at the time of writing this profile. While it seems a little scary at times, I feel well supported by my program and hope to start beginning preparations for my Royal College exam next year.

Will you be pursuing further training or looking for employment? What resources are available to you for future planning?

I will likely apply for further sub-specialty training. I hope to work at a large academic center and so fellowships are generally required. I have been lucky to have very supportive staff and senior residents who have been great resources.



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Non-Clinical Life

What are your academic interests (e.g. leadership activities, research)?

During residency, I have had the opportunity to work on committees with the Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta, Resident Doctors of Canada, the Canadian Association of Pathologists and the College of American Pathologists. I have also published and presented papers and projects in the fields of dermatopathology and hematopathology. In my residency program, we have also had numerous opportunities to engage in medical education activities for medical students, fellow residents, and medical laboratory staff.

What is your work-life balance like, and how do you achieve this?

Having a good work-life balance is really important to me but it can be difficult at times to achieve with the clinical workload in residency and the other scholastic endeavours I have chosen to take part in. I generally end up having long days at work on weekdays to finish up research projects, presentations, and studying but this allows me to free up weekends for other activities when I am not on call.

I try to work out every day and enjoy watching movies and spending time with my fiancé, family, and friends.

Disclaimer: These specialty profiles illustrate some aspects of the lives of individual residents, and convey their personal perspectives on the challenges, opportunities, and rewards of their chosen fields. These views may not be shared by all residents, as there is tremendous diversity in lifestyle, experience, and interest among the residents in each specialty.