



## Karen Goodall

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### Who has inspired you most in your life?

My parents' attitude to work and education. Education gives you the tools you need to maximise your career opportunities and make your own decisions. Try your best and you'll not regret that you didn't try hard enough. And in your work, work honestly and to the best of your ability.

### What does your job entail?

Most of my job role involves performing diagnostic tests on patient samples. My laboratory performs a range of testing which helps investigate the immune system, looking for allergies, inherited and acquired immunodeficiencies causing chronic infection, and autoimmune conditions where the immune system attacks the body. These tests are mostly automated, but I still have to perform some manual assays, and some of the results produced require interpretation. For example, we perform some slide-based assays which require me to read them using a microscope and interpret the patterns I can see. As well as my work at the bench, I am also a training lead. This means I have responsibility for staff and student training and competency within my laboratory. I have to ensure that training programmes are in place, and that both staff and trainees are trained appropriately and able to competently perform various tasks within the laboratory. I occasionally teach as well. I have to balance these additional responsibilities with my routine laboratory work.

### How did you get into this line of work?

I accidentally got into this line of work after doing a Masters degree, part of which was in a diagnostic laboratory. I hadn't been fully aware of the career before, but enjoyed doing laboratory work as part of the Masters in particular, and when a job was advertised for a trainee Biomedical Scientist soon after, I applied and was successful.

### Outline your career to date

I have worked in the Immunology laboratory from trainee through to now, so I started off as a trainee Biomedical Scientist and gained my professional registration with the Health and Care Professions Council first of all. This is a legal requirement in order to practice within the UK as a Biomedical Scientist. After that, I undertook the IBMS Specialist Portfolio in Clinical Immunology, which proves that I have the knowledge, skills and experience in my area to practice as a Specialist Biomedical Scientist. Along the way, the opportunity to take on training responsibilities came up and that became part of my day to day role as well.

### Tell us about your qualifications and training

Initially I did 4 A Levels (Biology, Chemistry, Maths and Music) as I wasn't sure what I wanted to do specifically but knew I was interested in healthcare and stuck with subjects that I enjoyed and also would be useful for a healthcare career. I missed the entry grades for Pharmacy and started Radiography, but quickly realised the course wasn't for me and repeated my A Levels. I missed Pharmacy again on repeat and started a degree in Biochemistry. After graduation, I then undertook a Masters in Medical Laboratory Science, and then applied for the trainee biomedical scientist job.

### What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

Working as a Biomedical Scientist requires quite a few qualities and skills that appear to be contradictory – for example, you need to be able to work well in a team to deliver the diagnostic service, but this also means that you should be able to work alone as well. As scientists, we have to be logical, critical, and be able to pay attention to detail, to ensure that the results we provide are accurate and correct. We need to be able to manage time effectively, so that patients get their results in good time. Good communication is key, both with other members of your lab team, and with non-lab staff like clinicians, other healthcare professionals and engineers, so that information is passed on clearly and efficiently. Sometimes a huge amount of patience and perseverance is needed when trying to deal with difficult situations, like troubleshooting a broken analyser! Self-motivation and willingness to learn are also important, to make sure you keep up to date with scientific developments. We may not necessarily meet our patients face to face, but we are still here to help our patients and support the wider NHS care team looking after them so it's good to keep the patient at the centre of your work.

### What is the best advice you have ever received?

Whatever you choose to do as a career, make sure you enjoy it. You'll be doing it for a long time! Enjoying what you do makes it easier to deal with the stress, the dark mornings, the long shifts, and the inevitable difficult days. In passing, remember that healthcare careers are usually professional careers with a strong vocational side which often means going the extra mile for your patients, rather than dropping everything and walking out at home time.

### What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Don't feel under pressure to decide on a specific career too early, but if nothing else try and find an area you think you'd like to work in. If you're still not sure, follow the subjects you enjoy and are good at. Your careers teacher can help you find a career that matches your skills and talents! Don't worry that there's only one path to your ideal career – sometimes you have to travel a few paths to find the right career, and that's nothing to be scared or ashamed of. People who have tried a few different things bring different experiences and knowledge to their job which can be invaluable. And it's ok to change your mind!