WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A CLINICAL TRIAL STATISTICIAN?

Versha Cheed - Birmingham CTU

My name is Versha Cheed and I am a senior statistician at the Birmingham Clinical Trials Unit at the University of Birmingham.

What's your background? My undergraduate degree was a BSc in Management Science (also known as operational research). Following that, I worked as an Analyst for NPOWER. I enjoyed working with data, and had an interest in the medical field.

I applied for a few roles as a statistician, and was advised to do a Masters in Statistics. So I did the MSc Statistics course at Leicester, and then applied for a job as a Trainee Medical Statistician at BCTU where I have been ever since.

Which clinical areas/methodological areas are you currently working in? I mainly work on a portfolio of late phase clinical trials in obstetrics and gynaecology, which is one of BCTU's main disease areas with the University being so close to the large Birmingham Women's Hospital, and our Director being a Professor of Obstetrics and Maternal Fetal Medicine. However, I also have trials in intraoperative care, HIV and social care that assess medical, surgical and complex interventions.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your job? One of the most rewarding things about being a statistician in an Academic CTU is seeing the trial from the idea stage through to the very end, and carrying out the final analyses. Undertaking a final analysis is not a small task, and as statisticians, we work closely with the Trial Management Team to ensure that the data is clean and accurate ahead of running the analyses. Undertaking the final analyses for a trial is exciting and we are in the privileged position of being the first to seeing the results, then presenting the results to the Chief Investigator and the research team of the trial, with the hope to publish the paper in high impact journals.

Our work leads to the development of effective treatments which will then lead to improved patient care and health outcomes.

What do you like best about your job? I would say that it's the variety of work and the application of statistical methods to health-related data that I enjoy the most. I enjoy the statistical programming side to my job, the combination of technical work and the communication of this to colleagues is also something I like. In reality, being a statistician is just problem solving and, with that, decision making. Decisions have to be made all day every day, you are constantly learning!