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Please tell us about your background and your PhD project with The Anatomical Society

I started off as a Sport and Exercise Science undergraduate at Heriot-Watt University, and then moved on to Edinburgh University for an MSc in Human Anatomy where I joined The Anatomical Society. During my summer project, I worked with Professor Simon Parson who offered me a PhD position with him in Aberdeen. Here I studied vascular defects in a childhood form of Motor Neuron Disease called Spinal Muscular Atrophy.

What is your current position?

I am a Postdoctoral Research Fellow with Dr Lyndsay Murray at Edinburgh University.

What were the advantages of having your PhD funded by The Anatomical Society?

I was rather keen on keeping a foot in the anatomy world as I'd like to teach anatomy throughout my career. Being funded by The Anatomical Society meant I was able to attend meetings and network with researchers and lecturers across the UK.

Did you enjoy attending and presenting at meetings of the society?

Presenting my research at society meetings was always enjoyable, more so when it was an oral presentation. In my 3rd year I was delighted to be awarded with the Young Investigator Oral Presentation Prize, so that certainly added to my enjoyment of attending the meetings!

Has association with the society as a student benefitted your career development?

Absolutely! Society meetings were a great opportunity to have a good chat about potential next steps in my research as well as in my career. Society members are all so friendly and willing to impart some handy advice for young career researchers.

What were the most important things you learned during your PhD?

I enjoyed presenting my research at any opportunity and was involved in a lot of public engagement activities. As a result, I learned to communicate my research to a broad spectrum of audiences, from those with no scientific background to those who are experts in the field. Additionally, I co-supervised multiple honours projects which honed my organisational skills through balancing my own work with supervising others.

What advice do you have for undergraduate members who are planning to do a PhD?

I think it's a great idea to get as much experience as you can. If you want to do a lab based PhD, then get some work experience to learn the basics. Having confidence in the lab will give you one less thing to worry about when you're trying to concentrate on your research.