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Dr Falk/Guts UK Awards 2020

MEDICAL STUDENT BURSARY WINNER: Ms Sarah Coleman

PROJECT:
Assessment of Gluten-Free Diet adherence in adults with Coeliac Disease



Ms Sarah Coleman, BMedSci, undertook this research at the Academic Unit of Gastroenterology, Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield, whilst intercalating in a BSc degree in Medical Sciences Research. She is currently completing her 4th year at the University of Sheffield Medical School.

Ms Coleman explains:

'Throughout medical school I have come to appreciate the burden of treatment adherence experienced by patients with chronic health conditions, such as coeliac disease (CD) and the importance of optimal monitoring and follow-up in order to best support these patients. This, coupled with my interest in Gastroenterology, was the reason I chose this project for my intercalated BMedSci.

'The mainstay of CD treatment is a lifelong gluten-free diet (GFD), which allows healing of the small bowel (reversal of VA) ultimately reducing the risk of complications such as gastrointestinal malignancies. Despite these benefits, rates of GFD adherence range between 42% and 91%. The only accurate method of confirming resolution of VA is by taking a duodenal biopsy, and therefore biopsies may be viewed as the optimal method of assessing GFD adherence. However, many non-invasive markers of adherence are used in clinical practice, including dietitian evaluation, serological markers, and patient questionnaires.

'The two aims of my study were to investigate the value of taking an additional biopsy from the duodenal bulb (the first part of the small bowel), and the performance of the Celiac Dietary Adherence Test (CDAT) questionnaire, when assessing GFD adherence in adults with CD.

I found that an additional biopsy from the duodenal bulb increased the detection of persisting VA by 10.4%. The CDAT performed poorly when predicting persisting VA, with a sensitivity of 55.6% and specificity of 52.5%.

'This was the largest study to date to assess the use of a duodenal bulb biopsy in patients with established CD, and was the first study to investigate the performance of the CDAT. We concluded that the gold standard for predicting persisting VA should be a repeat biopsy with the inclusion of a bulb biopsy. This data has the potential to alter guidelines outlining follow-up of CD patients in the future.'

Ms Coleman's Project Supervisor, Consultant Gastroenterologist Professor David Sanders comments:

'Sarah was a delight to have in our department, she was hard working, diligent and thoughtful. Through her research, Sarah demonstrated that the conventional methods for assessing remission and adherence in adult coeliac disease are flawed and that the only reliable approach is to undertake a gastroscopy and duodenal biopsy. This is practice changing research and of interest to all GI clinicians in the UK and further afield. Sarah is an outstanding medical student and we are so pleased for her to have received this award. It will not be the last in her career!'

Ms Coleman states:

'I am absolutely delighted to have been awarded one of the Dr Falk-Guts UK Medical Student Prizes. This award is of great value to me personally as testimony to the work I have put in over my intercalated year.

'I have thoroughly enjoyed experiencing the world of medical research, and I am extremely grateful to Professor Sanders and the amazing team at the Academic Unit of Gastroenterology in Sheffield for the support they have given me. This award will help fund my attendance at international conferences to further my knowledge and also support applications to job posts in the future.'



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