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What did you study at university?

After a 'false start' doing a year of History at Oxford University, I switched courses to study a four year integrated Masters degree in Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry. I was missing the science I had studied at A-Level and thought that the course seemed to cover a wide range of topics, including cell biology, genetics and DNA, microbiology and virus, and even biophysics. I was also aware that a biochemistry degree could lead on to a wider range of careers for me than history could – both in science and other areas.

What did you like best about your degree?

My four years as an undergraduate certainly didn't disappoint, as we were exposed to so many cutting edge topics, taught by brilliant leaders in their field. What really sparked my interest was the areas we studied that highlighted the relevance and importance of biochemistry to our lives. I was particularly interested in the development of drugs and how drugs affect our bodies. I decided to pursue this interest with a career in the pharmaceutical industry.

What did you do after university?

In my first job after university I worked for a company that performs the clinical trials necessary to test the effects of new medicines in patients, before they can legally become widely available. This position involved determining any adverse side effects found in the patient data, and ensuring that these were reported correctly. After some time, I realized that I wanted to get involved with some of the more commercial aspects of the business, so I moved to a consultancy company that provides advice to many of the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies. My work included researching when new medicines were likely to be become available and how well they might sell, and advising on how to make the best plans for the future of the business. Having gained a wide range of experience of the drug production industry, I moved from working with multiple companies as clients to working in the market research and information department for a global pharmaceutical company.

Pharmaceutical industry:

where licensed drugs are produced, developed and distributed for use as medicines

Microbiology:

the study of organisms at a microscopic level

Biophysics:

applying theories from physics to biological systems

What are the main duties of your current role?

Now my main role in my current job is to look at how the company's current 'blockbuster product' is doing out in the real world, such as how it is perceived and how well it is selling. The job requires working with many other departments in the company, such as sales, finance marketing and promotion.

Why was your degree useful to you?

Although I do not work in a lab doing biochemical experiments, the knowledge I gained from doing my degree has certainly made my job easier on many occasions, such as when reading medical papers or researching how a drug works and affects the body. Being able to understand the scientific concepts behind these is a real advantage. I have always found the pharmaceutical industry to be a truly fascinating place to work. It covers all the aspects of other big global industries, but the fact that it is so essential and entwined with government and society makes it even more stimulating. It also adds a significant element of job satisfaction knowing that everyone in your workplace has the ultimate goal of helping people to overcome ill health and improve their quality of life.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Information about careers in the pharmaceutical industry (ABPI):

<http://careers.abpi.org.uk/your-career/school-and-college-students>

Career ideas (Prospects):

www.prospects.ac.uk/options_biology_career_areas.htm

Biochemistry careers information:

www.biochemistry.org/careers

General science careers information:

www.futuremorph.org

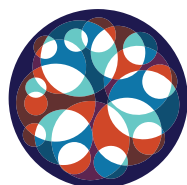
WHAT IS BIOCHEMISTRY ?

Biochemistry is the branch of science that explores the chemical processes that take place inside all living things, from bacteria to plants and animals. It is a laboratorybased science that brings together biology and chemistry, by using chemical knowledge and techniques to help understand and solve biological problems.

For more information visit

www.biochemistry.org/careers

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