

My week: Francesco Cian

Francesco Cian is a veterinary clinical pathologist and co-manager at BattLab, a veterinary diagnostic laboratory based in Coventry

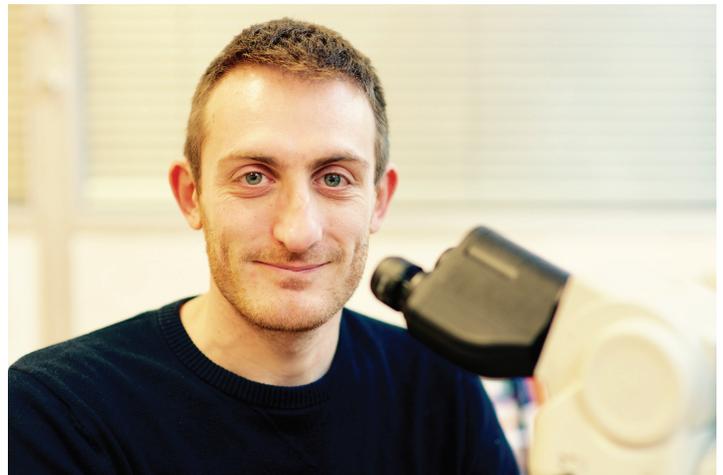
I DO not have a typical working week. Managing a small business has its pros and cons. Being able to multitask is definitely necessary and the weeks are never boring. This is how one week in December turned out.

Monday

The clock shows 5.30 am and it's dark outside. Why am I awake so early? Oh yes, my two cats, Remi and Norman, are meowing and want to join me in the bedroom. Breeders say that sphynx and Devon rex cats are extremely affectionate and devoted to their owners and I can confirm this is absolutely true.

A few minutes to get ready, a quick gym session to wake me up and then off to work. The drive is usually smooth and by 8.45 am I'm at work. The office manager has been here since 8 am, busy phoning the practices that use our laboratory services, checking to see if they need samples picked up. Our laboratory is relatively small and we do our best to offer a personal service to our customers.

I check my work e-mail and it is about time for the technicians to walk in and start setting up the machines. As part of the daily routine, all analysers have to be calibrated and daily quality control has to be performed before running any sample, in order to ensure precise and correct results.



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Every Monday at 11 am we have a weekly laboratory meeting with all staff to discuss any issues that there might be in the lab, and to inform everybody of any changes that are needed. Around midday, the first courier returns from his run and drops off the samples. Afternoons are the busiest time for us, since we need to process all the samples and report the results by the end of the day.

Tuesday

Today I get to work a bit earlier than usual in order to have some uninterrupted time to dedicate to marketing activities. I co-manage the laboratory with another colleague,

Noel Clancey, a Canadian clinical pathologist, and we decided to split some of the lab responsibilities. I take care of most of the marketing side. Today, I have to start planning evening seminars for our clients. We also have to finish preparing the articles for our monthly newsletter, which is due to go out next week.

The afternoon is dedicated to daily diagnostic work; today we have many cytology samples, which are my favourite ones, but also the most time consuming.

At 6.30 pm, it is time for a quick food shopping trip at a local shop and a nice dinner in front of the TV. I have started watching the series 'House of Cards' and I admit I am totally dependent on it.

Wednesday

Wednesday there are no special activities planned. The morning is not too busy and I have time to answer to some e-mails from our German parent company, and to finish reviewing a cytology case report for *Veterinary Clinical Pathology*. Since I left academia, I have been working hard pursuing some educational and research activities in my spare time. This helps keep my enthusiasm high, and this diversity is an aspect of my job that I enjoy very much.

The afternoon is intense. We receive a very high number of samples and we spend

a long time on the phone with some of our clients wanting advice on results. There is one sample in particular; a blood sample from a dog with a marked leukocytosis and atypical circulating blasts, likely an acute leukaemia. The prognosis is poor but we suggest additional investigations to further characterise and stage the disease.

It is never easy to give sad news like this, even if you do not know the patient and its owner. However, it is part of our job and I always hope that my diagnosis will help provide the animal with the best treatment it needs.

It is 6.30 pm, time to drive to Leamington Spa to have dinner with Carla, an Italian colleague and friend I met when I moved to the Midlands.

Thursday

This morning I make a courtesy visit to one of our clients who runs a general practice in

Coventry, followed by a busy afternoon of diagnostic work in the lab.

My evening is dedicated to work, but in an area that I especially enjoy. Being chair of the European College of Veterinary Clinical Pathology's website editorial board, I need to update the website with a few new documents from the college. Then I take a quick look at the news on a Facebook cytology page that I manage; someone has posted a cytology picture of haemolymph from a tarantula. These unusual images are very cool and sometimes make me realise I live a boring life.

Friday

Tonight I fly to Milan. I have recently been involved in the UNISVET scientific committee, an Italian society of continuing education for vets, and tomorrow we have a seminar on cytology of the lymphoid system.

Saturday/Sunday

Saturday is the CPD day. All goes well. We have a long theory session in the morning and a practical wetlab session in the afternoon with individual microscopes. The audience is very heterogeneous; 40 veterinarians, some already have good cytology skills, for others cytology is a relatively new subject.

Sunday morning is free. I want to go to Palazzo Reale and visit the exhibition of Hokusai, one of my favourite Japanese painters. There's time for a bit of quick shopping before heading to the airport. I should be home by 9 pm, ready to start another working week, tired but happy.

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