

## How I Got Into Histology

By: Anna Hughes

Backwards.....I got into histology backwards....



I started doing some immunohistochemistry some 25 years ago working on my third undergrad degree in biology for my undergrad thesis. I started off in business years before then – I have degrees in Finance and Economics, but always wanted a biology degree. But, I grew up in Huntington, WV during a time where the guidance counselors encouraged you to get degrees in whatever was available as jobs within a 20 mile radius of where they assumed you would live and die.

My husband was going to graduate school for a PhD in Chemistry (and I admit I was jealous) and encouraged me to go back. So, after getting my Biology degree from the University of Alabama, I intended to go to graduate school at the University of California, San Diego.

But as life twists it also turns and my husband's NIH postdoc only paid 28k a year....so I needed to work instead. So, I took a job in the Immunology department at the Scripps Research Institute in Dr. M.B.A Oldstone's lab. Here, not only did I perform cellular and molecular assays, but also conducted my own animal studies – whose endpoints were largely histology.

From there, I have moved around to different Pharma's in their Drug Discovery programs. From Johnson and Johnson, to Merck, to GSK, and now back to Janssen (a Johnson and Johnson company). Each time adding different techniques and histological techniques to my tool box. Not just general histology, but specialized necropsy, trimming, and IHC for neurology, bone, and ophthalmology.

While at Merck, because I had so much experience, during one especially large reorganization, they placed me in a histology/molecular pathology core group... and I have never looked back. It has always been the one thing I have especially enjoyed doing. So I decided to embrace it full on by obtaining my HTL and then my QIHC.

I have been very blessed. I have enjoyed working in Drug Discovery and Safety Assessment in Pharma – two very different sides of the same coin- where I learned a great deal about target ID and then the other side, target toxicology. And now, I work in Oncology Research, a field I love doing what I love... development of commercial and novel antibody IHC assays for target ID and validation, as well as in vivo model development.