**Mike Barer, Department of Respiratory Sciences (02.06.22)**

My name’s Mike Barer, I’m a Professor of Clinical Microbiology. My lab and main office is in the Maurice Shock Building on the first floor, and is connected with laboratories that handle both moderately and highly dangerous pathogenic microbes.

My role is split between University research and clinical service which I conduct at the Leicester Royal Infirmary, where, as a clinical microbiologist, what I do is to assist in the diagnosis and treatment of infections, and pursue lines of research that we hope will make that process easier and better and achieve faster and more effective cures for various diseases.

My principal interest for the last ten years or so has been in respiratory infections, and in particular in tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is a disease of poverty, and understanding the circumstances in which people find themselves and how that may influence – both how the disease progresses, and a particular interest is the transmission of disease, and we’ve been working on that in tuberculosis and also very much so in Covid-19.

A particular area of activity at the moment is taking samples using face masks, and we do this by putting strips of polyvinyl alcohol into specifically adapted facemasks. These, rather miraculously actually, collect the microbes that people breathe out, and we’re able to send these masks really all over the world, have samples taken, and have them sent back to us, and they seem to give a reasonable representation of what people breathe out.

We’ve needed materials scientists, we’ve worked with colleagues in Engineering – we’ve also looked, we’re interested in doing sampling in different circumstances. I’ve spoken to colleagues in History about sampling in prisons, and relating that to the history of the particular prison that we might work in, and in fact we are planning this year to do a fair amount of sampling. While holding on to the primary purpose of what I’m trying to do, I’m very interested in all the relevant disciplines and how they might contribute.

Where I go if I’m fed up and want to stomp around? Well, my honest answer is the graveyard! I sometimes walk up to the deli, buy a packet of crisps, and walk through Victoria Park, and walk down Peace Walk – of course, I think the Botanic Gardens are great.