

CASE STUDY: FROM STUDENT NURSE TO PRACTICE NURSE BENEFITS OF ATP SCHEME

From Student Nurse to Practice Nurse ... the benefits of the Advanced Training Practice Scheme and the exposure to a General Practice environment that it provides

A Practice Nurse gives her account of her experience as an undergraduate nurse and the opportunity the Advanced Training Practice (ATP) Scheme gave her in general practice. She describes her journey from qualification to employment, as a General Practice Nurse. Highlighting excellent support, supervision and 1:1 mentoring that ATP placements provide.

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Introduction

My name is Lauren, I am 24 and I work as a practice nurse at Bowling Hall Medical Practice. I studied adult nursing at the University of Bradford and I qualified as a nurse in March 2013. I studied health studies at college prior to applying for University and during my spare time I worked as a health care assistant in a nursing home. Most of the women in my family are nurses and I knew from a young age that I too wanted to be a nurse, but gaining experience in a health care environment helped to confirm this.

During my time as a student nurse I had a variety of different clinical placements; elderly medical, vascular surgery, stroke rehabilitation, accident and emergency, day surgery and a community placement at Bowling Hall Medical practice. I enjoyed aspects of all my clinical placements but I particularly enjoyed the time I spent at Bowling Hall. My mentor was incredibly supportive and from day one the all of team made me feel welcome. The nursing team had such good working relationships with the patients. My mentor had been with the practice six years at this point and she knew the majority of her patients very well.

Delivering care in general practice

The practice nurse play an important part in delivering care in general practice and is involved in most aspects of patient care. Practice nurses provide a variety of services including; childhood immunisations, routine vaccination programmes, phlebotomy, wound care, ear irrigation, cervical screening,

sexual health screening, contraceptive advice and reviews, travel consultations, lifestyle and weight management advice, smoking cessation, Spirometry's, ECG's, as well as other specialist chronic disease clinics such as; hypertension, coronary heath disease, chronic kidney disease, stroke, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma.

Final weeks of placement

During the final few weeks of my placement with the practice, they were advertising for a practice nurse. I was surprised when my mentor told me that it had been agreed that they would consider hiring a newly qualified nurse. I had always wanted to work as a nurse in the community, I loved the homely feel and the continuity of care but I had always assumed that I would not be considered for a community post until I had a few years experience of working in a hospital environment. I expressed my interest and the team felt it was beneficial that they had been able to get to know me through my placement. I applied for the position and was fortunate enough to be accepted. At the time my application was accepted I still had one more placement to complete, and the practice was a nurse short but they held the position until I qualified, something I am very grateful for.



Student Nurse to Practice Nurse

During my last placement, many nurses and other students asked me about my plans for when I qualified, as usually student nurses are in the process of applying for jobs at this stage. The reaction when I told other students I planned to go straight in to the community was mostly positive but the majority of the qualified nurses openly told me they felt it was a bad idea and that a community nursing post was not a job for a newly qualified nurse. I refused to let people's comments deter me there were over 70 students in my intake and I was the first to secure employment, I considered my self to be incredibly lucky.

My first day at Bowling Hall Medical Practice was 1 month after qualifying and I have now been with practice for 15 months. I thoroughly enjoy my job and I work with a fantastic team of people. There are so many specialty areas in nursing that any new position can be a challenge. I have a different set of skills to a nurse working in a hospital environment, I would not be able to walk on to a ward and conduct a medication round or administer IV fluids but like wise a hospital nurse would be unable to carry out the clinics I do.

Practice nursing is a challenge for any nurse regardless of whether they are newly qualified or not, the training requirements remain the same. Any nurse considering a career in practice nursing must be willing to study. Since joining the practice I have undertaken nine courses, three of which are distance learning, studied over a period of six months and accredited by the University of Teesside and University of Bradford. I will achieve 30 credits at degree level for each of these three courses. They have been time consuming and required an assignment and exam for each, but I see this as a fantastic opportunity to keep me up to date with the academic requirements of studying at a higher level.

The future

Given the opportunity I would like to carry on studying and in the future possibly use my credits for further career progression.

The transition from student nurse to registered nurse can be a frightening thought, to feel suddenly accountable for your actions as a qualified nurse is daunting. There will be pressure for nurses in any environment but having worked in many different settings, I have found primary care to be a more relaxed and organised environment to work and I feel that contrary to people's opinions about primary care being no place for a Junior nurse, I could argue that I have possibly been better supported in my transition than I would have been in many other posts. I feel that I have received a huge amount of support throughout my transition, particularly from my mentor but also from the whole team.

Confidence is an area a nurse must build upon

The one tip I would give to newly qualified nurses is never be frightened to approach other health professionals for advice. I did not gain an A for all my clinical placements, I was told on many occasions as a student nurse that I needed to be more confident in my practice, following one placement I considered leaving University all together. The best advice I was given was from a nurse with many years experience, she said that confidence is an area a nurse must build upon, but taking time to stop and question your practice is not necessarily a bad thing, it allows time to examine the decisions you are about to make and call upon people for advice when appropriate, too many junior nurses make mistakes through being over confident and inexperienced. I am lucky that all of my colleagues are very approachable. During the first few months and still now from time to time, I knock on colleague's doors to ask for advice, my mentor was even kind enough to give me her mobile and home contact numbers so I could call her from work for advice, which I did on a few occasions. It is important to keep your patients and your own registration safe and never be afraid ask for advice.

I would encourage newly qualified nurses to apply for community posts if this is an area of interest. My experience has been positive and I also know other junior nurses that have taken up posts in primary care and are equally as happy.

Career Choices for nurses

Current NHS policy is increasing the shift of care from hospital to general practice providing nurses with an exciting career choice.

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