

Becoming a Clinical Research Nurse: Mavis's Journey...

What made you decide to get into research nursing? I studied a module in research for my dissertation at Sheffield Hallam University and developed an interest in research. After graduation, I decided to apply for a job as a research nurse because I also have a nursing background.

What has surprised you the most about research nursing? It's very demanding. To be a research nurse, you have to be very knowledgeable and up to date with current protocol. Also there is a lot to take in, but I'm slowly getting to grips with it. The support from my colleagues really helps though.

What advice would you give to nurses thinking about making the transition? It's very different and interesting. You have to have plans in place to recruit patients into studies as we have targets to meet, just like on the wards. Time management and planning is very important.

What do you like best about your new role? I enjoy this role because every staff member, no matter what team or position, is very supportive. I also like the fact that a lot of training is available to help with the transition and interpersonal relationships are very good. I look forward to coming to work every day because of the 'Hello!' and smiles. I also have a deeper understanding of how every aspect of patient care and treatment begins with research until it is accepted as standard. There are new challenges every day and it varies from identifying patients, arranging to meet and discuss the study with them and then the study period, including seeing patients at their follow-up appointments. New studies are also introduced at meetings which I have had the opportunity to attend and it's interesting to know the process a study

goes through before we start to recruit patients into the trials.

So far, is there anything you don't like about being a research nurse?

No

Describe a typical day for you

I recruit patients to take part in research through screening in out-patient departments, wards, via telephone or through arranging visits at the CRF. Patients who meet the criteria for a particular research study and are keen to take part are given a patient information sheet, in some instances I have to work closely with the doctors to identify possible patients. For some studies the nurses obtain informed consent, once they have had the training to do so. I haven't completed mine yet, but I am looking forward to doing so. I also participate in coordinating all activities that take place at the Research Facility day to day. I liaise with the medics (Principle Investigator), laboratory and pharmacy for a study to run smoothly and perform follow up visits. I also attend multidisciplinary meetings.

How do you see your career developing now? Would you go back to your old job, or are you planning to stay in clinical research?

I plan to stay in research to progress to a clinical research lead nurse.

Do you think your role has had a direct impact on patient care? If so how? Yes, research nurse are at the forefront of research and participate in treatments being developed with the aim of improving quality of life for patients as well as quality of patient care. We also build good relationships with patients through visits and follow up on treatment. Patient feedback is generally very positive, they all seem to like taking part in research. That's partly why I like my job so much!

Do you think your role contributes to embedding research across the Trust – if so how? It helps to create awareness for patients who come to the Trust; talking to them about the various research activities going on. The ward staff are briefed on the study to gain their support when we visit. They can also pass on information to other patients who may wish to take part.

What do you think are the most valuable aspects of your role in relation to patient care? Being a patient advocate; to make sure patients are well informed so as to make informed choices if participating in a study. Also to make sure consent is voluntary and to let them know that they can opt out at any time they want to without it affecting any treatment they are having. Confidentiality, privacy and individuality prevail on each visit. There is also anonymity with regard to information sent outside the Trust.

Nurses outside of research may not think we do "nursing", how would you respond to this? We apply all aspects of nursing in dealing with patients as already mentioned, as well as taking bloods for laboratory investigations and processing them if required and if trained to do so. We administer trial drugs and infusions in a safe manner and according to drug administration guidelines. We request scans, X-rays, and perform follow up visits. The patient is central to every part of the research nurse role, without then treatments and improvements to health care wouldn't happen. To be at the forefront of supporting patients to improve health care for the future is a real privilege as a nurse.