



A Day in the Life of an OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSE

'A Day in the Life of' is a series written by experienced community nurses for student nurses to show what working in the community is like.

Personal details

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Location: Wales

1. What's a typical day for you?

Occupational Health (OH) Community Nurses work autonomously and undertake a variety of tasks; we utilise a wide range of clinical skill sets in order to undertake our roles and to make effective decisions. Daily duties can range from undertaking pre-employment medicals, health surveillance and health screening, administering vaccinations, phlebotomy, oversea travel clinics, assessing fitness for work, promoting health promotion and health education, client consultations, and complex case management. We utilise our clinical skills to review and analyse results, and we exercise sound clinical judgement in order to be able to redirect resources efficiently and to make important sound clinical decisions.

2. What has been your proudest moment in nursing so far?

I have a couple – being awarded my qualification/s in General Nursing and subsequently in OH Nursing, and being awarded the Queens Nurse (QN) title. This only compounded what comes naturally to me, and what I am truly passionate about, which is being able to help people and make a difference to their lives. The attributes of being a Nurse, and a QN really does reflect the values and beliefs that I hold within, and each time I revalidate, I am reminded of who I am, what is important to me, and what I have achieved. That makes me proud!

3. What skills set would you expect a student nurse to bring to the role of community nursing?

Soft skills such as communication and listening, negotiation and networking, cultural awareness, critical thinking, empathy, integrity, and conflict resolution should be at the forefront of your mind-set, as these are all essential skills needed in order to be successful in a career in Community Nursing, to include OH. Furthermore, good writing skills is equally important. In OH community nursing, being aware of relevant legislation such as COSHH, Noise at Work, Employment Law etc., would be advantageous. For example, undertaking a NEBOSH course provides a very relevant background encompassing a variety of areas that very often crop up in Occupational Health.

4. What do you wish you'd known before you started working in the community?

I wish that I had a better insight into OH Nursing throughout my Nurse training. There is not enough emphasis on this specialist area of Community Nursing, and there has always been a lack of understanding of what OH Nursing actually is, even amongst other health professionals. The world of OH Nursing has evolved significantly however since I entered into this specialist field 20 years ago, and in particular, since the onset of COVID, the importance and value of OH Nursing being an integral part of a multi-disciplinary function is becoming more and more publicised within its own right.

5. Any advice for aspiring community nurses?

Community Nursing is without a doubt our future, and we need dedicated and committed nurses to continue to drive the passion and high quality care given within our communities forward. Follow your heart; you know yourself better than anyone, so choose a direction that really fits with who you are and what you believe in. Take the time to explore and discover for yourself what is involved in various Community Nursing roles. Seek to undertake work, paid or voluntary, in a variety of settings to allow yourself to be fully informed. For example, some may perceive Occupational Health Community Nursing as not being as "clinically hands on" as traditional Community Nursing roles, but unless you understand what is involved, how can you make that judgement? There is no doubt that OH Nurses are highly skilled, and depending on the business area, i.e., public sector v private sector, demand and skill sets may vary. For Occupational Health Community Nursing, nationally, there is a shortage of qualified and skilled OH practitioners, yet the demand for this specialist area of Community Nursing is growing, and is becoming a better understood and sought after specialist area in which to work in: that's exciting.

Find out more:
www.qni.org.uk/students

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