

Member profile for QNI Community Nursing Research Forum



Name: Laura Jeffers

Job title: Community Clinical Research Nurse

Employing organisation: Whittington Health NHS Trust

Country of residence: London, United Kingdom

How would you describe your current role and research interests?

In my current role I work with other clinical research nurses, practitioners and midwives in the Research Delivery Team at Whittington Health, an NHS Trust in north London. I started my role in August 2022. This role was new for the trust, no one had ever done my job before; it was designed to allow research to happen in the community and primary care setting. I work closely with all of our community teams outside the hospital such as district nursing to build relationships and understand what research studies we might be able to support and deliver in the community. I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to take part in research without having to go to hospital, whether that be in their home, GP practice or community clinic.

I am slowly building up a portfolio of studies that I will deliver. These studies cover a broad range of topics, including loneliness, Parkinson's disease and diabetes. We know that there are some particularly 'underserved' groups that perhaps don't have access to research opportunities or even access healthcare in the same way that others can. I believe that being able to take part in research in all settings is a huge step in improving overall healthcare for these groups, and I hope my role can contribute to this.

How did you first get involved in doing clinical research / your own research?

I was lucky to attend a very research focused university. From our first year we took part in research modules. I will be honest and say that I initially found it very boring! I couldn't understand why all this research was so important and why I had to learn about it. It wasn't until the Covid-19 pandemic that I saw the potential of what was possible with clinical research. I was one of the student nurses employed to assist the workforce during the initial lockdown in March 2020. I was placed on a renal and transplant ward for Covid positive patients. We had patients taking part in the RECOVERY trial. Now we know how successful the RECOVERY trial was and how much we learnt in such a short space of time because of clinical research.

In my final year I undertook a literature review as part of my dissertation around healthcare professionals' perceptions and experiences of caring for patients who were overweight or obese in the primary care setting. I had feedback that with a little bit of extra work this would be publishable. I spoke to colleagues at the university who were happy to support me in

getting this published. This is still ongoing, but hopefully soon I will have my first piece of published research with my name on it.

What difference has your research training and experience made to your career / clinical practice / academic practice?

My time in research has taught me that change is always possible, to keep an open mind and always question the norm. I have struggled in previous jobs to engage with other people who are passionate about making change; however, when I moved to research, I became surrounded by other people that are always questioning how we can make things better. I have been able to meet other people who are passionate about the same things as me. This has inspired me to continue working towards change and know that together it is possible to make a difference.

What has been your favourite research experience so far?

My favourite experience so far has been recruiting my very first patient to a study. I was so nervous; But when the patient decided to take part, I was so excited that I had been able to give them the opportunity to take part in research that will hopefully improve healthcare in the future.

How did you develop your research career?

I wouldn't say my research career is fully developed as I am still relatively new to research. Doing my dissertation and having positive feedback that someone might want to read what I'd written was the first time I had considered research as a career; going through the process of getting something published was a good eye opener to the academic research world. When I started my job as a Community Staff Nurse, I quickly realised I wanted to do more to improve the lives of patients in the community and research seemed like a good way to do this.

I got in touch with my Research Department at my trust who told me about the research opportunities, what studies we were currently running and about Good Clinical Practice (GCP) training. A few months later I had done my GCP training and applied for my current role! I never thought I would get the role I'm in now; I'm so pleased that I did. I'm still very much learning about the research world, but I'm excited for what the future holds.

What are your top tips for anyone wanting to become more research active?

- **Engage with your local research team** - if you work in an NHS Trust there will be some sort of research happening. Find out about people delivering the research in your Trust and get in touch. Ask if you can shadow them or if you can assist in any way. They will be delighted that someone is interested in research.
- **Speak your mind** - if you think something could be done differently don't be afraid to say it. If you really want to change something you can! Don't be afraid to ask for help from senior colleagues. Remember that you do not have to have heaps of experience to make change or start doing your own research.
- **Do your GCP** - doing your GCP is a really good way to increase your knowledge on good practice in research. It is free and open to everyone, and contributes to CPD.

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