

## Ten Questions about being a Consultant physiotherapist

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### 1. Please describe briefly your job role and responsibilities

I work for the Knowsley Community Respiratory Service, the service manages most respiratory conditions and we manage the patients from diagnosis onwards.

My roles are quite varied, they include:

- Providing consultant cover of the service which is made up of medical consultants, a nurse consultant and my own role – we support teams in the acute and long-term management of patients.
- Community Clinics - The aim is to provide accurate early diagnosis of respiratory conditions and on-going support and optimisation – this includes ordering and interpreting test (CTs, CXRs, full lung function tests, bloods etc), medications optimisation (inhalers, nebulisers, mucolytics, etc) and also non-pharmacological optimisation.
- Respiratory clinic in the local addiction services to help identify patients with respiratory disease.
- Professional leadership for the therapy part of the team and support the continued development of this element of the service, including our physio led palliative care service.
- Involvement in research projects, linking in with local universities as well as providing teaching (both locally and nationally).
- Working with a local STP to improve access and uptake of Pulmonary Rehab
- Working with North West Ambulance Service to include Physiotherapists when responding to 999 calls. The aims is to initiate treatment at home, signpost the patient to local services and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions.

## 2. Please describe briefly your career pathway so far

My career pathway so far has unsurprisingly had a big respiratory focus – even as a student I loved respiratory – part of that was down to having an amazing placement!

- My first post was as a junior physio working at Leeds General Infirmary, covering the usual core areas, but ended up doing a few respiratory rotations, including general medicine, ICU, orthopaedics, neuro ICU, head and neck surgery and renal medicine.
- I then got a senior 2 respiratory rotational post at Manchester Royal Infirmary – I loved this post, I got to work with some amazing physio staff and loved the variety of respiratory physiotherapy. The rotations included general medicine, general surgery, cardiac surgery, head and neck surgery, renal medicine and renal transplant, HDU, pulmonary rehab, cardiac rehab and respiratory outpatients.
- I was promoted to Physio lead in ICU, HDU, surgery and cardiology at Stepping Hill Hospital which involved more management and leadership responsibilities. I was also involved in the physio provision an enhanced recovery after surgery (ERAS) project.
- I then relocated for personal reasons and took a new role in a Knowsley Community COPD team as a band 7 within pulmonary rehab (PR). I have worked for this team since 2012 in a variety of different roles, and I think it has been the best move I ever made!
- Although the team has been the same, my role within the team has changed significantly. I started working within the pulmonary rehab team, I then became the team leader for the therapy team.
- I then completed my non-medical prescribing qualification and started running some COPD clinics before I got the opportunity to study for an MSc in advanced practice (I was the trainee advanced practitioner for the team), the same time the service went from COPD to a wider respiratory service.
- While I was studying for my masters, my role developed to running clinics with a medical consultant present as part of developing advanced skills and training on the job.
- The opportunity for an AHP consultant post came up in 2018. Since then the role has continued to develop. I have been lucky to work with an amazingly supportive team (both managers and clinical staff) who have really supportive for me to develop – and have looked beyond the background and looked at the skills of the person. The team is constantly try to improve patient care – and I love the pace of change and opportunities to develop and challenge myself.

## 3. Have you completed any postgraduate education courses relevant to your role?

I have completed my non-medical prescribing and an MSc in advanced practice in healthcare and I have recently been offered a place to undertake a part time PhD at Edge Hill University.

## 4. What have been the challenges in achieving consultant level practice?

I think the fact it is quite a different role from other consultant posts means there hasn't been a pre-tryed pathway for me to follow, but that has meant I have had the ability to shape the role myself. As it is a new role that extends the traditional role of a physio, there has been some negative reactions. However the NHS is changing, staffing levels continue to be stretched, with a significant shortfall in clinicians working in all aspects of respiratory care. We have to diversify and

provide services in a different way, a way of doing this effectively is to upskill existing staff within services – which gives people the opportunity to develop at all stages and banding. I do not take concerns about the role as a negative thing or personal thing – it is an opportunity to show other professions the knowledge and skills we have as physiotherapists and the positive impact we have on managing respiratory patients along the whole of their journey.

#### 5. What advice would you give to a new graduate keen to develop as an advanced practice and consultant level Physiotherapist?

- Take every opportunity you can!
- Show your interest in developing, but take your time to find your passion – you have to love it and having a good background of core rotations is so helpful in developing advanced skills.
- I think it is a bit easier now as there are much more opportunities to develop advanced skills and consultant level practice – when I was training I had only ever heard of advanced practice in MSK.
- I think it helps to get the support of a mentor – services and managers need to be looking at succession planning- so finding a therapist working in an advanced role is helpful.
- Look at jobs that may not be traditionally aimed at physio's - look at the personal spec and if you meet the criteria challenge employers and apply.
- Make sure you highlight your development desire in appraisals and look for relevant courses that your trust can support you to complete to support your development.
- Look at personal specs and job descriptions for advanced practice posts – that will help guide you on the skills and areas to develop.

#### 6. What personal qualities/characteristics are important to have for your role as a consultant Physiotherapist?

- Apart from your 6 C's I think you need drive and determination.
- You need to have vision about how you can improve services both locally but on a larger scale and the ability to multitask – being able to manage a variety of very different roles at once is key.
- You need to be a role model for others in the profession – you want to show new graduates what a fantastic profession they are entering and the amazing possibilities that are available.
- You also have to be assertive and diplomatic (good communication skills are fundamental) as well – you will be challenged but you have to have the ability to put your point of view across in the most effective way.
- You have to not be afraid to challenge traditional thinking, so having confidence in yourself and what you are proposing is important.

#### 7. How do you measure your effectiveness as a consultant-level physio?

I guess I measure my effectiveness in different ways:

- I have to be clinically effective – and that can be very different from have I provided the patient with a good experience after attending the clinic? Have I provided an accurate diagnosis and managed that diagnosis in the right way?
- You can measure effectiveness in very Black and white way – such as impact on hospital admissions and number of patients reviewed in clinic.
- I also measure my effectiveness in the support I provide the therapy team and the developments they are making to improving patient care and the work I'm doing with NHSE&I to improve PR across Cheshire and Merseyside.
- Setting reasonable SMART goals is key to this – you can show how you are developing and meeting goals – but its easy to want to try and take and too much

## 8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

In 5 years' time I hope to be on the way to completing my PhD, I also want to have supported the development PR services across the region and to be influencing care on a more national level. I also want to continue to develop my clinical skills and continue to develop my research output.

## 9. What type of CPD activities do you do at this level?

My CPD activities are really varied and include:

- In-house training sessions
- Attending national conferences both as attendee and presenter (British Thoracic Society and European Respiratory Society )
- Specialised training such as radiology interpretation
- North West Thoracic society training
- Disease specific training (aimed more at diagnosing and medical management).
- Regular 1:1 with my medical consultant supervisor where we can discuss cases.
- Developing university courses
- Self-directed leaning
- Regular reflections - These are really important to focus on the areas I need to develop, but also to demonstrate how I have progressed (its important to remember how you have learnt as I think you can feel like you aren't really improving as there is always so much to learn).

## 10. What would be your 3 top tips to an experienced Physiotherapist keen to develop as an consultant physio

Picking only 3 is hard!

1. Look to diversify your skills set and think outside the box
2. Find a supportive manager who shares your vision
3. Persevere – if people say no demonstrate the benefits the role would bring and try again