

Ten Questions about being a Consultant physiotherapist

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1. Please describe briefly your job role and responsibilities

I am currently the interim FCP Lead in BHSC working with the West Belfast GP Federation. My main roles and responsibilities include the implementation and delivery of the FCP service (9.4 WTE- 15 people), ensuring all governance arrangements are in place and working collaboratively with all stakeholders to provide a more streamlined pathway for people presenting with MSK conditions in primary care.

In my substantive ASM post, I am responsible for the delivery of services across Physiotherapy MSK Outpatients, Trauma and Orthopaedics and Pelvic Health (including the Regional Physiotherapy Haemophilia Service, Paediatric Rheumatology Service and Amputee Service). I am professional responsible for ICATS and Occupational Health.

2. Please describe briefly your career pathway so far

Junior rotations

MSK Outpatients: Junior and Senior roles

Clinical Specialist Sports Medicine

Senior 1 Rheumatology Outpatients

Clinical Tutor responsible for Undergraduate students

Learning and Development Facilitator- L&D support for both Undergraduate students and Physiotherapy staff

Team Lead MSK Outpatients

Assistant Service Manager: MSK, T&O, Pelvic Health and Administration

Interim FCP Lead

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

MSc Sports Medicine

Extensive post graduate clinical CPD in MSK- MACP, Cyriax, Acupuncture, Kinetic control, Explain pain, CBT course, IRMER, MRI

Masters Modules: Enhanced Learning and Teaching

ILM Level 3: Train the Trainers

ILM Level 5: Workplace Coaching

Regional AHP Leadership Course: Our Emerging Workforce

QI Training- 2 internal x 6 month training programmes

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

Availability of clinical courses- I funded 95% of all my clinical post graduate CPD.

Advanced level practice posts weren't available in my clinical area of expertise 5/10 years ago therefore there was limited clinical career progression at that time.

However, that the experience I gained in my other non-direct clinical posts has been invaluable. It allowed me the opportunity to develop in a way that wouldn't have been possible if I had remained in MSK giving me a greater perspective across the physiotherapy profession.

5. What advice would you give to a new graduate keen to develop as an advanced practice level physiotherapist?

- Focus on the patient- regardless of the clinical area you think you may want to specialise in.
- Every rotation is invaluable to developing your expertise in your chosen field- I learnt some of my most valuable lessons from patients on the acute medical and surgical wards when I moved from a Band 7 post in MSK to my Clinical Tutor post.
- In every clinical area identify what it is you need to improve about your understanding, skill or knowledge base to make a difference to a patient.
- Most importantly remember to reflect on your "softer skills" and work hard to develop them. Patients remember when you are kind, listen and empathise- you don't need to always have the answer- that's why we work in a team

6. What personal qualities/characteristics are important to have for your role as a advanced practice physiotherapist?

- Effective communication skill are essential- verbal and non-verbal
- The ability to really listen and the support someone to identify and achieve their goals.
- To be caring
- Non-judgemental
- The ability to empower others
- Share learning and good practice
- Recognise you are there to serve the patient, the local community and the team
- Ability to see the bigger picture
- Be solution focused
- The instinct and desire to drive improvement and change
- Ability to work as a member of a team- thinking about what the team needs to provide support
- Ability to work safely out of comfort zone

7. How to do measure your effectiveness as an advanced practice level physio?

In current interim role:

- Effective team working

- Quantitative through data collection and delivery against KPI
 - Qualitative through feedback from all stakeholders: service users, primary and secondary care colleagues
 - Feedback from immediate team- manager- previous 360-degree feedback
 - Complaints/ adverse incidents
 - Compliments
 - Sick leave/ vacancy rates
8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- I think it will depend on the opportunities that come up.
9. What type of CPD activities do you do at this level?
- Leadership and management/ Quality improvement- linked with projects within organisation
10. What would be your 3 top tips to an experienced Physiotherapist keen to develop as an advanced practice physio?
- Ensure you have the clinical expertise to work at an advanced practice level
 - Use the leadership competency framework to identify areas for self-improvement and awareness- identify a mentor you trust
 - Be brave- you are going to be out of your comfort zone- ensure you have an appropriate level of support and supervision to deliver safe, effective care- but recognise you now need to make the complex decisions and take the appropriate action.