A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A... BREAST CARE NURSE AT BUPA CROMWELL HOSPITAL

Each month we will publish a ‘day in the life’ of a member of staff to showcase some of the many different roles across the organisation.

What made you want to be a Breast Care Nurse?

Most of my family are in the nursing profession so I was quite exposed to hospitals. I’d seen the effect that nurses had on patients and always wondered whether I could make them better. From the age of 10, I wanted to do what I saw in my uncle. I believe I was pretty mature for my age and was determined to pursue a career in nursing.

I studied Nursing in the Philippines, and passed out in 2001 and specialised in women’s health. Nursing was always of interest to me, having young female members in the family that I could look after.

What is the best thing about your job?

Touching someone’s life. Job satisfaction is very different in my job as I focus on helping people in a way that money can’t buy. Giving patients emotional and psychological support gives me the most satisfaction.

What is the hardest thing about your job?

Helping women face difficult decisions. Some issues can affect women in many ways, not just physically but also emotionally. So supporting women to make difficult decisions regarding their treatment is challenging but I would like to support them in whatever decision they make.

How would a patient end up seeing a breast care nurse?

I mainly see patients when they have been diagnosed with breast cancer and any breast condition. When they are given a breast cancer diagnosis I am there to support them and follow them through their care pathway. From diagnosis to treatment and then any issues they may have subsequently, either physically or mentally. I support not only the patient, but also their families.

What is an average day like for you?

I usually work 09:00-17:00 Monday to Friday, but this is flexible depending on the patients I am seeing. First thing in the morning I do ward rounds to check on patients who may be having, or have had surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy, then I am briefed on new patients who have come in.

I also run a nurse-led clinic for patients who have completed their cancer treatment and are having follow-up consultations, prosthetics and dressing changes etc. After this I focus on emails and phone calls, checking in with patients who are at home and may have specific questions about their treatment. I then give myself time to focus on service improvement, for example creating leaflets to promote our services, or drafting patient information documents. I also carry out teaching sessions with students.

What advice would you give to someone hoping to follow in your footsteps?

Nursing is a passion. You have to put yourself in the patient’s shoes and ask how you would want to be treated if you were them. I would advise anyone to think about whether it is really what they want to do - to make a change in someone’s life - as I think that is very precious.