A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A... PAEDIATRIC DIETITIAN AT BUPA

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

What made you want to be a dietitian?
I have always been interested in nutrition and have always tried to eat healthily. The career change came naturally to me. Nutrition and Dietetics is a relatively recent career offering many avenues to pursue, including clinical, research, public speaking, clinical work in hospital and as a voluntary worker. I trained in Scotland for 3 years before relocating to England where I completed my dietetic placement at the NHS before joining the Cromwell team.

What’s the best thing about your job?
I love the variety of the work and the fact that I get to make a real difference to somebody’s life. Helping children and families improve their health and wellbeing is very rewarding.

What is the hardest thing about your job?
When patients are very unwell, and there is not a lot you can do nutritionally, sometimes it feels that you are not able to help them which can be hard.

How would a patient end up seeing a Dietitian?
People can refer themselves, but they are usually referred through a GP, consultant or Allied Health Professional. As a dietitian I would typically see any patient diagnosed with a medical condition where diet manipulation and adjustment is required in addition to disease specific medication etc.

What is an average day like for you?
The day usually starts with responding to emails and general administration. Inpatient menus get checked and altered every day, so I then check the menus in the kitchen to ensure that patients on specific diets have ordered suitable foods before it is prepared and served at mealtimes. The majority of the morning will be spent on ward rounds, where I check on all patients’ progress from a nutritional side, and delivering nutritional supplements. My outpatient clinics are usually in the afternoon (although I occasionally see patients in the mornings if required) which involves a consultation with patients, supplying individually tailored treatment plans and writing up reports.

Is this role different in the NHS to the private sector?
We work with many international patients here at the Bupa Cromwell Hospital and you would normally do in the NHS, and we are very lucky to have dedicated interpreters on-site which makes things a lot easier. Also, our international patients have different nutritional treatments and products in their home countries, so we spend a lot of time finding similar treatments to those they are used to. In the private sector you have more time to spend with patients than in the NHS, so you can really listen to their needs without feeling rushed.

What advice would you give to someone hoping to follow in your footsteps?
Becoming a Dietitian is very enriching, rewarding and never boring. Not only will you be able to change patients’ lives but you will also be able to change your own. Being equipped with this vast knowledge on nutrients and your body makes you inspired to live a happier and healthier life. There are also numerous courses and training opportunities if you wish to specialise in a specific area.