



Case study

Name: Chris Fowkes

Job title: Pre-assessment Nurse

What did your early career look like?

I loathed school until I was in my early teens when the careers advisor said “if you want to be a nurse, you need to do a lot more and do a lot better to get the grades”. Well, that motivated me, it was hard to catch up and take lessons at the same time, but I did it. I left school at 16 and started nurse cadets prior to starting my Registered Mental Health Nurse training in 1982. As a cadet I got a flavour of caring, which gave me the opportunity to see if I was making the right decision of going into nursing. After 3 years of training, I got my first staff nurse job on a ward that specialised in dementia (loss of memory) which I really loved; it was very challenging and hard work. There was a lot of physical, psychological and emotional care required. There were times I did not feel 100% confident as I did not have some of the knowledge/skills, so I decided to come to Leicester to do my general nurse training. After graduating, I worked in surgery, intensive care infection control as a specialist nurse and then a manager of a very busy surgical admissions unit. Nursing is all I have done in my working life and I would not change it for anything.

How did you become a pre-assessment nurse?

After 36 years of loving my job, I needed to slow down, age and all that! So I flexibly retired. I was very lucky to apply for a part time role in cardiac surgery/cardiology pre-assessment and was successful at interview. This role is really rewarding, complex, and busy, but I love it

What is a typical day as a deputy ward sister?

No two days are the same; the patients are all so individual, they have varying physical and mental health care needs and varying levels of support, help, advice and reassurance requirements. This support takes time, patience, and a lot of explanation, especially if the patient has additional needs. Some patients have very complex health needs, with lots of long-term health conditions, as well as, in my area, a heart related condition. My typical day is in one word very ‘busy’! The purpose of the pre-assessment is to ensure patients are fit, safe and prepared for their procedure/surgery. I check their weight and height, work out their body mass index (BMI), take their blood pressure, pulse, oxygen saturations, and do an ECG (tracing of their heart beat/rhythm) and many blood tests. Then I complete all nursing documentation in readiness for admission; reporting any issues or problems to their consultant, so they can be actioned before admission.

Do you have any words of encouragement for anyone thinking about a career in health and social care?

Never say **no**. Things are possible if you are prepared to work hard for them, I am the proof of this. No matter what age you are. The secrets of my success are to get as much advice, guidance and support as you can. I did and I achieved more than I thought ever possible.

To find out more - www.your-future.co.uk