



Case study

Name: Dawn Gent

Job title: Health Care Assistant

What did your early career look like?

I left school, which I loved, at the age of 17 and started work in the Civil Service as an administrative assistant in a local government office paying out state benefits. I went into healthcare after working for 32 years in an office environment when I felt I needed a career that was more rewarding and wanted to make a difference to people's lives so I left to do my current job as a health care assistant in August 2012.

How did you become a health care assistant?

I have worked for 8 years as a health care assistant on a cardiology ward. I found out about the job from a friend who was a qualified nurse. I had also visited friends and family in hospital and having watched the staff on the wards I felt that I would be particularly suited to this type of work. I had no previous experience in this sort of work apart from caring for my elderly mother, but I felt that now my children had grown up I had a desire to fill a void in my life by caring for others. The only qualifications required at that time were basic maths and English, the rest we were taught on the job. I find working as a health care assistant to be extremely rewarding. At the end of each shift I leave my ward feeling so satisfied that I have done my job to the very best of my ability and have also made a difference to so many people's lives. Each shift that I do I receive thanks from the patients and the staff for all the help that I have given them throughout the shift.

What is a typical day as a health care assistant?

The days are busy. We have 20 patients on my ward and I am supported by another health care assistant, a housekeeper, three qualified nurses and a ward manager. I start the day by assisting the patients who need help to get out of bed ready for breakfast. I then help make beds and perform skin checks on patients checking for pressure sores. I assist any patients that require help with their daily washing and dressing. I then proceed with other daily tasks such as weighing the patients, clinical observations (blood pressure and blood sugar checks for example). These continue throughout the day as required. All staff are expected to contribute to keeping the ward clean and tidy and are therefore each given daily tasks. Throughout the day we answer call bells and assist patients with their needs. We also try and find time to chat with our patients who inevitably will feel quite frightened and vulnerable at times.

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

If you are a naturally caring person who wants to make a difference to so many people's lives then you should come and work with us in the NHS. Working for the NHS is incredibly rewarding but very challenging. Most colleagues are great fun and a pleasure to work with. It is very flexible and if you are willing to work hard you can progress to other roles.

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