



Case study

Name: Janice Brown

Job title: Macmillan Deputy Lead Cancer Nurse

What role/ profession are you in?

I am a Registered Nurse and currently a Macmillan Deputy Lead Cancer Nurse. I have been in post for 10 months. It is a mixture of leadership, management and clinical expertise. It is a very rewarding role, setting out services and leading Clinical Nurse Specialists to provide excellent cancer care to patients. To become a nurse many years ago I needed the equivalent on 5 O levels including English and Science. I did my 3 years training and progressed through many years of extra training and job roles to the senior position I now hold.

What did your early career look like?

I was a Health Care Assistant (HCA) for 6 months prior to doing my nurse training. This was a period of time I also enjoyed, I was only 17 at the time, but I knew that nursing was for me at that young age. I loved caring for people and the hospital environment I found exciting and interesting.

How did you become a Macmillan Deputy Lead Cancer Nurse?

I left school at 16, and I enjoyed my time there. I needed more qualifications for nursing therefore I went onto further education, where I took practical and educational qualifications for nursing. I was still too young to start nurse training so I took a job as a dental nurse and went to night school to gain a qualification in this field. I then did my nurse training. My career as a Nurse has been wonderful and one I am very proud of.

I became a Staff Nurse on an acute surgical ward in 1987 where I stayed for 10 years. The learning and education has not stopped throughout my career. I also did a year out in the community caring for patients in their own homes. This was rewarding and patients were very welcoming to me. We had a good nurse/patient bond as we got to know each other so well. I took formal educational courses every two to three years, leading to a diploma and then a BSC science degree in Cancer Nursing. Clinical courses to specialise in breast cancer care and theatres formed part of my lifelong learning as did communication and leadership courses.

I previously worked in breast cancer care since 1999. I progressed from a Staff Nurse, to Ward Sister then a Breast Care Specialist Nurse. In 2009 I became the first Breast Specialist Advanced Nurse Practitioner and set up the service as we see it today. I have trained four more nurses to undertake the role. I enjoy working in the clinics and being a mentor and adviser to the rest of the team.

What is a typical day for you?

A typical day starts at 8am for me, it can be in one of three hospitals and usually involves many telephone calls, emails, and meetings with a variety of health care professionals such as Doctors, Nurses, GPs, Physios, Occupational Therapists, Charity Managers, Senior Hospital Managers and of course patients. Meetings will result in actions to take forward in planning services and caring for patients with cancer, both in hospital and the community. Some days I spend with patients in clinics examining them and referring and reporting on the results, or supporting them with their diagnosis and treatment.

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

I have been a Nurse in the NHS for 36 years. It has changed many times but the heart of it centres on patients and the staff who work for it. It can provide education and an extensive career pathway for those who want to progress or for those who are happy to work in a caring organisation within a supportive culture without the want to progress, the option is there. Payment is fair according to national pay scales, and the pension scheme is good.