



**Jill Thornton**

**Clinical  
Pharmacist**

### What does your job entail?

My current post is rotational which has given me the opportunity to work in a number of clinical specialities including cardiology, stroke, nephrology, neurology and paediatric haematology and oncology. Additionally, I work as part of the inpatient and outpatient pharmacy teams. My current rotation is in neurology where I work on the ward as part of a multi-disciplinary team. My job entails speaking with patients to determine what medications they were taking before being admitted to hospital. I make sure any new medications prescribed are safe and appropriate for the individual patient. I counsel patients on the safe and effective use of any new medication. I love being able to address any fears, concerns and questions patients have about their medications.

I have an essential role to play at discharge where I ensure patients are competent in their medication regimens, allowing for the best outcomes for each patient and the prevention of future hospital admissions. Part of my role involves providing information and advice to doctors regarding the best choice of medication for a patient based on local and regional guidelines. I provide advice on correct dosing, side-effects and any monitoring requirements for medications. I also provide specialist advice to the nursing team regarding safe medication administration.

### How did you get into this line of work?

I have always wanted to work in healthcare and had a keen interest in science at school. Pharmacy seemed like the perfect career to combine these interests. I completed a work experience placement in a community pharmacy which I loved. The patient contact and problem-solving nature of the role made pharmacy seem like a great career. I studied pharmacy at Queen's University Belfast. During my clinical placements in hospital, I learnt about the role of the hospital pharmacist. This made me keen to pursue a career in hospital pharmacy.

### Outline your career to date

I completed a master's degree in pharmacy at Queen's University Belfast. Following this I completed my pre-registration training in a community pharmacy. My role was varied and involved assisting in the dispensing of prescribed medication and counselling patients on the safe use of medication. At the end of this year I sat one final exam to become a registered pharmacist. Once registered I worked as a locum community pharmacist for a number of months before getting a hospital pharmacy job as a junior rotational pharmacist.

I have completed rotations in a number of clinical specialities. This has given me the opportunity to work with senior pharmacists who have provided specialist training, thus allowing me to develop my clinical knowledge and skills. Over the past 2 years I completed a foundation programme which provided important education and training opportunities.

### Tell us about your qualifications and training

I studied pharmacy at Queen's University Belfast. The pharmacy degree is a 4-year master's program. I have also completed the pre-registration training year in a busy community pharmacy. Since starting my job as a junior pharmacist I have completed the Hospital Foundation Programme. Additionally I have recently signed up to an advanced pharmacy practice course which will allow me to become an independent prescriber.

### What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

Pharmacists require excellent communication skills to be able to work well as part of a professional team and also to communicate effectively with patients. Other important skills include prioritisation, organisational and delegation to ensure that work is completed on time and to a high standard.

### What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

Deciding what to study at university is a huge decision that can be overwhelming, but take comfort in the fact that other people are feeling the same. Speak to people working in jobs that you think you might like to do and find out how they got on their career path. Don't feel pressured to go to university straight from school, a year out could provide the time to decide on the correct career path.