



Jonathan  
McMahon

Senior Pharmacy  
Technician  
(Procurement)

## What does your job entail?

I work as part of the Procurement team in Pharmacy to ensure the efficient and cost-effective purchasing of medicines. I am primarily responsible for raising orders for the Craigavon hospital pharmacy site although I raise and send orders for various sites throughout the Southern Trust. I send regular orders twice daily (morning and afternoon) to wholesalers such as SangersAAH, Alliance Healthcare, Phoenix Healthcare and Movianto. I also send orders to companies throughout the UK for a variety of pharmaceutical stock, including for unlicensed medicines. I regularly review back orders, supply issues and shortages to ensure the continual flow of pharmaceutical stock into pharmacy. I regularly liaise with suppliers and pharmacy staff to resolve stock discrepancies or supply issues. I also review daily stock checks and investigate and resolve any irregularities in stock levels.

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

I graduated in 2011 with an Honours degree in Construction Engineering and Management. I had difficulty in obtaining employment in the construction industry. I was lucky enough to obtain employment as a Nurse Bank administrator in the Southern Trust in 2011. I decided while working in the Nurse Bank that I wanted a change in direction, so I began working towards a certificate of Health Sciences with the Open University. At this time, I became interested in working in pharmacy as I had always had an interest in pharmacology. I applied for and was appointed to a temporary part-time ATO post in 2012. I then obtained a student Pharmacy Technician post in Belfast where I continued to work until I became a qualified Pharmacy Technician.

## Tell us about your qualifications and training

After doing my GCSEs I undertook a BTEC National Diploma in Construction. I then undertook a Foundation Degree in Construction Engineering and then an Honours Degree in Construction Engineering and Management. I have a certificate in Health Sciences with the Open University. This qualification was geared towards working in a laboratory setting and the next step would have been to diploma level and eventually degree level. I undertook and obtained some units for the diploma, but I quit so I could focus on my BTEC in Pharmaceutical Sciences and NVQ Level 3 Diploma in Pharmacy Services.

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

My job requires the ability to work under pressure and to deadlines. We have to meet supplier cut off times every day to ensure we receive the stock we need. It is important to be able manage your time adequately each day and prioritise tasks. We can get multiple requests each day from staff in Pharmacy and from other wards and departments, so it is important to be able to manage these demands effectively. The job also requires good teamwork and communication skills. Being positive and motivated is very helpful too.

## What is the best advice you've ever received?

My dad once told me to always stay curious in your job. I have found this advice particularly helpful in pharmacy as the service is always changing. There are always new and updated policies and procedures and new ways of doing things, and of course new drugs and treatments being introduced. Staying curious has helped me to always ask questions and to stay up to date in all the developments in Pharmacy. I always try to avail of as many training opportunities so that I can expand my knowledge as much as possible. Having this mind-set has helped me to become more confident in my job.

## What do you like to do in your spare time?

I have recently bought a mountain bike and I would say that I have been bitten by the cycling bug! When not doing this, I also enjoy going for walks and reading. I do enjoy playing video games and watching a good movie or TV series also.

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

I would tell myself to not worry about not knowing what career I wanted. I never knew in school what I wanted to do, and it was only later in life that I really became interested in a certain path. I feel very different now to how I felt when I was 16 and this is not something I could have predicted. Everyone can change their minds at any stage in life and there is no harm in being uncertain.