



Mark Allen

Pharmacy Technician

What does your job entail?

My core function is to supply the medication for the patient once a treatment plan has been agreed upon by the consultants, doctors, and pharmacy at the daily team meeting. I also visit the patient in their own homes to complete a drug history to ascertain what medication they would normally receive from their GP, so that the team has an accurate understanding of the patient. From the visit I can also raise any concerns I have regarding the patient during the team meeting which may require input from other health professional such as dieticians or physios. I also liaise regularly with GP surgeries and community pharmacies to advise them of any changes to their patient's medication, so they are able to update their records in a timely manner. Other roles include updating our own records for the patient; answering queries from GP surgeries & Community Pharmacies, liaising with nursing homes – all to provide the best treatment possible for the patient

How did you get into this line of work?

I started off working in the laboratories in Craigavon Hospital then applied for the student post in pharmacy. It was a two-year B-Tec in Pharmaceutical Science course, one day release from pharmacy and then received a full-time post after completion.

Outline your career to date

As a technician in the hospital, I began my role in the busy dispensary in Craigavon Hospital, labelling and dispensing patient prescriptions and discharges. I then moved to the aseptic suite making chemotherapy drugs for cancer patients, parental nutritional bags for adults and neo-natal babies. I also worked as a biologic technician - ordering and making medication for patients; worked in production to make pre-filled medicine packs for patients and wards such as ED, ICU; worked as an IMM (Integrated Medicines Management) Technician in the hospital which involved talking to the patients about their medicines and co-ordinating with the pharmacist to ensure the patient had a supply of required medicines on their discharge from hospital. From there I had a successful interview for AC@H and became the first technician in Northern Ireland to hold the role.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I was educated to A-Level and worked in a variety of jobs before applying for the student technician post with the Southern Trust. The Trust paid for the two-year B-Tec which was a mixture of theory, practical skills and assignment work. Working during the two years in the hospital also helped gain an understanding of the practical applications of the job.

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

The job involves working with many different people so having the ability to work well with others and have good listening and communication skills are vital. Every patient is different and has individual needs and you will need to adapt so they receive the best care possible for them.

What is the best advice you've ever received?

"Own your mistakes, learn from it and don't make the same mistake twice." It is inevitable that mistakes will be made as there is so much variety in this job and there are new and different challenges every day. The patients change, the medicines change, improvements in patient care continually evolving. You won't know everything but as your years of experience grow, you will be able to adapt and face the challenges that each day holds.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

Spare time is split between family time (we do like visiting new places or go to the old favourites of the National Trust for chilling out time) and playing, coaching or watching rugby.

What advice would you give your 16 year old self?

Work hard and explore the world. Try something new that scares you. There are so many opportunities if you want them. Find a job that you love doing as it won't become a burden. Ask questions. And get off your phone, you're missing the best part!