

Ten Questions about being a consultant Physiotherapist

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1. Please describe briefly your job role and responsibilities.

- I describe my career as a portfolio career and I'm privileged to have such variety in my work. My main job role is as a consultant physiotherapist at the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust.
- My job roles is built around the four pillars which means I have clinical, educational, research and leadership responsibilities built into my job plan. I am 50% clinical, this means I spend time in outpatient clinics, on ward rounds, in MDT meetings and providing support for complex patients.
- My main clinical work is in the field of sleep and ventilation but I have experience and interest in other respiratory areas too. I do not want to bore you with my whole CV so I'll limit the other pillars to some key examples!
- Within the educational pillar, I provide education across the MDT at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. I am also the simulation lead for AHPs for the trust.
- I am research active and you can check out ResearchGate or google scholar for more information.
- The leadership aspect of my role varies and includes being involved with service transformation on a local level, developing guidelines and of course, one example is that I am co-chair for the consultant physio group.

2. Please describe briefly your career pathway so far

I qualified in the "job crisis" when the market was flooded with new graduates. I secured a post in the community which was pretty revolutionary at that time. I still reflect that this job role gave me key skills in decision-making, time management and holistic care. My career from there was rather

traditional with junior and senior rotations in district general hospitals before securing a clinical specialist post. In that role, I started my MSc at UCL before starting in my consultant role, in 2014 9 years after I qualified from the University of Brighton.

3. Have you completed any postgraduate education courses relevant to your role?

I have an MSc in advanced cardio Respiratory Physiotherapy from UCL. I have also completed some leadership training and have expanded my research skills knowledge through further training. Like any other physiotherapists, I maintain my CPD.

4. What have been the challenges in achieving consultant level practice?

I reflect now that I felt like a fish out of water when I first started in the post. Maybe we now know that as imposter syndrome! Being a respiratory physio means I work in a very medical world a lot of the time. My consultant colleagues have always welcomed me as part of the consultant body, but I know that is not everyone's experience. I have experienced colleagues, both fellow therapists and AHPs, as well as other MDT members who do not understand my role and what a consultant physio is or does. I would say being clear with others about the benefit of my role and what my role means has probably been the biggest challenge.

5. What advice would you give to a new graduate keen to develop as an advanced practice and consultant level Physiotherapist?

Take your time! Having a good grounding will be invaluable. Take opportunities that come your way and seek them out. Do not limit yourself by thinking your career will be linear. Be prepared to step up and push the boundaries of your role. Find a mentor and /or coach.

6. What personal qualities/characteristics are important to have for your role as a consultant Physiotherapist?

- Resilience! I love the variety the role offers but it does mean you are always juggling a lot of different responsibilities and deadlines.
- Out of the box/blue sky/ big picture thinking. This is an important skill for affecting change at population level.
- Learning to say no, assess each opportunity that comes your way and what the benefits might be versus the personal commitment.
- Lastly being humble, these roles are a privilege to hold.

7. How to do measure your effectiveness as a consultant-level physio?

- To borrow a phrase from one of the CSP professional advisors "you don't count if you don't count". We have set Key performance Indicators for the service I work in and so measurement against those is one way of assessing my impact.
- In terms of research impact measuring h-index, research outputs and impacts of my research on clinical practice are all measures used routinely.
- Each project I work on will have its own outcome measures and I use those additionally.
- I honestly think measuring effectiveness as part of our routine practice is something we need to improve upon as a profession as a whole.

8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

Right now, my focus is on securing funding for my PhD. I have learnt to live in the moment more and so I'm not thinking beyond that right now!

9. What type of CPD activities do you do at this level?

I undertake an awful lot of self-directed learning and reading. I am fortunate to be able to attend conferences where I present my work or am an invited speaker. A thoughtful learning needs analysis is required to make the best of educational opportunities and needs, and you need to balance this across the 4 pillars. Once again, you might have to think outside the box to source what you need!

10. What would be your 3 top tips to an experienced Physiotherapist keen to develop as a consultant physio

1. I think once the consultant practice framework is released that will be an invaluable tool for aspiring consultant physiotherapists to self-assess against. So make use of that as a starting point. Consider your areas for development within each pillar.
2. Be prepared to step up and bush the boundaries of your current role.
3. Expand your networks and horizons, think outside the box on this one (a reoccurring theme in my answers I feel!). Use SoMe to help your target key people you want to meet when attending conferences for example.