

Ten Questions about being an advanced practice physiotherapist

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1. Please describe briefly your job role and responsibilities

I work as an advanced practice physiotherapist in the colorectal team. My role is to assess, investigate, and manage patients with functional bowel disorders, ruling out cancer and IBD. The service is mainly physio led, along with the colorectal surgeon and is one of only very few similar dedicated clinics in the country. I am responsible for the teaching, training and support of the other specialist physiotherapist in the team who works in a different geographical location. I lead the rectal irrigation service in our team, with myself and my colleague being the only people in our NHS Fife to be using irrigation as a management strategy for our patients. I am a non medical prescriber which allows me to adjust and prescribe medication for my patients.

2. Please describe briefly your career pathway so far

I Qualified from Queen Margaret College in 1997 and started at Liberton Hospital treating care of the elderly patients. In 1999, I moved to St John's Hospital in Livingston. It was there that I got into the speciality of Pelvic Health, moving from Junior to senior II/B6. I moved to Fife in 2010 to a B6 pelvic health role. I have developed my current APP role from its inception in 2015.

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

I recently successfully completed my Non-Medical Prescribing in 2019 and can now prescribe. I have also completed NHS Fife's Leadership Awareness programme.

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

The lone working has been my biggest challenge. I sought mentoring from the MSK advanced practice lead as there aren't many APP roles in our specialism. I also network with other specialist physiotherapists across the UK.

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

- Find a mentor, they do not have to be a physiotherapist, but someone who can support and guide you both personally and professionally.
- Build your skills early, work on your communication skills in particular.
- Think leadership not just clinical skills, Think outside the box.

6. What personal qualities/characteristics are important to have for your role as a advanced practice physiotherapist?

- Empathy
- The ability to be flexible, and to adapt to difficult situations
- Resilience

7. How to do measure your effectiveness as an advanced practice level physio?

- Discharge outcomes
- Annual reports
- Patient satisfaction audits
- Prescription audits

8. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

As Band 8a lead clinician for the service

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

- Attend advanced clinical skills courses
- Leadership courses
- Attend APP study days
- Mentoring sessions
- learn from the consultants I work alongside

10. What would be your 3 top tips to an experienced Physiotherapist keen to develop as an advanced practice physio?

- Find a mentor and have faith in your skills, knowledge and experience
- Get support from management
- Be prepared to face challenges, especially if building a new service but do not give up!