

"I liked the idea that I could help people and make a difference without being as hands on as a nurse."

Ellyn Payton

Specialist clinical physiologist, neurophysiology

Employer or university

Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust

Salary range

£25k-£35k

Ellyn Payton and patient

How I got into the role

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I became aware of healthcare science during my A-levels when I was looking for possible university courses. I liked the idea that I could help people and make a difference without being as hands on as a nurse. First of all I was interested in cardiology but I was told that's very popular so I chose neurophysiology instead.

My clinical physiology ^[1] degree at Manchester Metropolitan University consisted of work placements in neurophysiology departments around the north west where I gained my clinical skills, and time spent at university gaining specialist knowledge of neurophysiology techniques and anatomy.

What I do

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I carry out diagnostic tests on patients, mostly electroencephalograms, or EEGs, to diagnose epilepsy. I apply electrodes to the patient's head to record their brain waves, and also take video so we can monitor any seizures. A typical EEG takes 20 minutes but we also do sleep-deprived tests and prolonged recordings. I'm trained to carry out EEGs on children and to work in different environments such as [intensive care](#) [2].

Another test I carry out is a nerve conduction study to diagnose carpal tunnel syndrome. This involves attaching leads and electrodes to the patient's arm and stimulating the nerve with an impulse to record the speed of their nerves. I also use evoked potential tests to monitor a patient's spinal cord during operative procedures too, for example where it's necessary to remove a tumour from the spine.

The best bits and challenges

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There's lots of variety in this role and I get to meet different people every day. The biggest challenge is if patients are uncooperative for one reason or another.

Life outside work

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I don't have to work shifts in this job so I have my evenings and weekends free. I enjoy going to the gym and doing exercise classes – it's definitely the best way to eliminate stress.

Socialising with friends is also important to me and I enjoy walking and visiting new holiday destinations.

Career plans and top tips for others

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Be prepared to work hard and be organised because at times it can feel as though you're juggling five things at once when you're training!

You might need to start at a low grade and work your way up, but, once you've qualified, it's a really well structured job.

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Physiology> [2]
https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Intensive_care