

## Real-life story - Kerry Brown

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Kerry Brown Podiatrist/research podiatrist

**Employer or university** Solent NHS Trust/University of Southampton

**Salary range** ?20k-?30k

### How I got into the role

I've had one or two different careers - most recently as head of policy for a national regulatory body - but I had the appetite for one more!

I'd never worked directly in health before, but I had an interest in human biology and was attracted to podiatry because it's flexible in terms of where you can work. Also, with all of us living longer, there's sure to be growing demand for the profession.

It was a revelation to me how broad podiatry is. My training covered diseases such as diabetes and rheumatological conditions that can put feet at high risk, and I studied pharmacology to understand the implications of medications. The course also covered fascinating subjects like health psychology, health education and promotion, clinical reasoning and critical reflection.?

### What I do

I qualified as a podiatrist a year ago and I'm currently getting experience of several different clinics and community settings. A lot of my current work is with people whose feet are vulnerable to ulceration so I use my skills and knowledge to help the wound to heal and prevent further tissue breakdown. Keeping patients

mobile and able to get on with their daily life is also a key part of my job, as well as promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours.

People tend to think we just cut toenails and deal with verrucae, but podiatrists look after a wide range of problems that can manifest in the feet. We can spot problems early like neuropathy and peripheral circulation problems, and we also look at the biomechanics of the foot and gait, including musculoskeletal issues in lower limbs.?

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## **The best bits and challenges**

Helping individual patients is rewarding, but I'm also fortunate to have a position as a research podiatrist where I play a part in improving the health of whole populations. It's brilliant that within the podiatry profession there's a strong culture of supporting research and evidence-based practice. So for part of the week I'm helping with ongoing clinical research, working closely with academics at Southampton University.

The biggest challenge is definitely stretching limited resources to cater for increasing patient demand and expectations. We podiatrists have a strong focus on prevention which is particularly important for the increasing numbers of patients with diabetes.?

## **Life outside work**

I moved from north London to do my podiatry degree at Brighton University and nothing gives me more of a break from work and studying than being able to walk along the prom, whether it's sunny or there's a winter 'hooley' blowing! Taking a dip in the sea is also a brilliant way to de-stress and refocus the mind.?

## **Career plans and top tips for others**

The advice I always give is to remain open to the myriad opportunities and diverse options, both during training and afterwards. To be a podiatrist, you need to be caring, creative and enjoy a challenge.?

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