

"It's a good feeling knowing I've done a little bit to help the patient feel even the slightest bit better."

Shannon was attracted to a role in pharmacy because of the attention to detail and accuracy it requires.

Shannon Harris

Assistant technical officer - dispenser

Employer or university

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

Salary range

£15k-£25k

Shannon Harris

How I got into the role

Expand / collapse

With a young baby to care for, I was looking for a stable job and a family friend who's a midwife suggested looking on the Health Careers and NHS Jobs websites.

My background is designing and making costumes where it's essential to be accurate with measuring and construction, so I felt those skills could be applied to preparing prescriptions. It's vital for me to measure and decant liquids correctly and check drugs are in the right strengths.

What I do

Expand / collapse

My role as dispenser is to label and dispense prescriptions for the patient. In any given day, the team prepares more than 180 prescriptions and each one can include up to 20 items per patient. It's a lot of work to get done correctly in a short space of time.

I came to the job with years of customer service and retail experience. That experience definitely helps my work now when I'm communicating with different staff, answering phones, and dealing with face-to-face enquiries.

The best bits and challenges

Expand / collapse

The best bit about the job is knowing I'm helping someone get the medication they need to help them on their personal road to recovery. In hospital, pharmacy is one of the last hurdles to help a patient to be in less or no pain and hopefully get them to a place where they feel well again. It's a good feeling knowing I've done a little bit to help the patient feel even the slightest bit better.

The challenges are ensuring the patient gets their medication within the allocated time period. Patients can understandably feel stressed and agitated waiting for their medication when all they want to do is go home.

Life outside work

Expand / collapse

I still do some costume making when I have the time and make smaller crafty things too, possibly for a summer or Christmas market stall. Having the determination to finish something I've started has helped in my career. It's important not to give up when you've had a bad day!

It's important to be able to switch off from work when I go home, but there are always break times for catching up with my loved ones if I need to.

Career plans and top tips for others

Expand / collapse

I love my job and see myself being in pharmacy for the rest of my career. There are more roles to choose from in pharmacy than you'd think. Long term I'd like to go back to university to do something science or pharmacy-related, but I'll need to do some of my GCSEs and A-level courses again first.

The pharmacy industry is always changing with new medications, ways of taking them, policies, information and experiments, so you have to be the type of person who can deal with change, contribute ideas and adapt to different ways of doing things.

My advice would be to research the careers and jobs in roles you can progress into later on.

Source URL:<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pharmacy/roles-pharmacy/pharmacy-assistant/real-life-story-shannon-harris>