

"Some people just need a service with a smile and that makes their day."

At school, Falina enjoyed her science subjects and always did well in them, so a career in pharmacy was the perfect choice for her.

Falina Ogada

Relief pharmacist

Employer or university

Leading high street pharmacy
female-pharmacist

How I got into the role

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I went to school in Malawi and was lucky enough to get a scholarship to study for a Bachelor of Pharmacy at Cardiff University. In Malawi at the time, there were no degree courses in health and life sciences, so this was a unique opportunity for me.

What I do

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My day is spent checking prescriptions and ensuring that patients are receiving the correct medication. Checks are made for interactions with other medications, ensuring

that the correct doses are prescribed for patients. As the responsible pharmacist in store, I have to ensure that the pharmacy is set up to serve patients correctly before it opens and throughout the day. I work with a team of other trained colleagues such as medicines counter assistants, dispensing assistants and pharmacy technicians.

Part of my working day is spent consulting and advising patients about their lifestyle, well-being and medical needs. I also answer any other queries that a patient might have, referring them to a doctor when appropriate. When privacy is required, I can conduct conversations in a consultation room.

There are many services that we offer in pharmacies, including a minor ailments service, emergency hormonal contraception, seasonal flu vaccination, travel health clinics and smoking cessation.

The core services we offer such as Medicine Use Reviews (MURs) and the New Medicine Service (NMS) help patients understand their medication, learn about side effects and understand why they need to take the medication. Sometimes I need to refer a patient to a GP.

My colleagues and I liaise with doctors or other healthcare professionals to help improve the health of patients and to make sure they receive the right treatment. If there is anything significant they are quickly referred to their GP or hospital depending on the situation.

I support and train dispensing assistants and I am also there to support pharmacy graduates during their pre-registration training year.

As a pharmacist, you're always continuing to learn. Training is part of your Continued Professional Development (CPD), some of it is mandatory, for example pharmacists have to be level 2 trained in safeguarding vulnerable adults and children, some you can choose after reflecting on your knowledge.

The best bits and challenges

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Working in a community pharmacy means that I meet different people. I am a relief pharmacist which means that I travel to any local pharmacy to cover sickness, annual leave or busy periods. I enjoy working with different people and teams to have a positive impact on patients. Some people just need a service with a smile and that makes their day.

Life outside work

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Most of my time outside of work is spent participating in my church's local activities.

I am also married with two children so my job and family life also keeps me very busy!

Career plans and top tips for others

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Working in pharmacy requires a lot of studying, so you have to put a lot of work in and you have to really enjoy sciences to get the most out of your career.

In community pharmacy, you are always interacting with people, so being a people person is essential.

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