

Real-life story - Sadie Diamond-Fox

Sadie worked in critical care for four years after she qualified as a nurse and she progressed into a role as an advanced critical care practitioner. Read more about what drives her.

Real-life story - Sadie Diamond-Fox Advanced critical care practitioner

Employer or university The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Salary range £40k-£50k

How I got into the role

Throughout my nurse training, I wanted to undertake advanced level study and practice through a Master's degree. After my nursing degree, my employers supported me to gain clinical, education, research and leadership experience and I was able to apply for an advanced critical care practitioner (ACCP) role. It meant I could progress in my career without having to pursue a management role.

My ACCP training took the form of a Master's in Clinical Practice in Advanced Critical Care Practice and I gained specialised skills in managing complex critically ill patients.

The ACCP role was developed to alleviate workforce pressures in critical care and our jobs will never replace junior medical staffing roles. We're highly trained and experienced clinicians who complement the medical workforce.

What I do

A typical day consists of a morning handover about all the patients in the unit, followed by a ward round which can be led by a consultant, junior doctor or an ACCP with consultant guidance. Each patient is examined and we review investigations and liaise with other specialist teams to formulate a care plan. I then catch up with my team and we distribute what needs to be done – things like transferring patients to radiology or back to their referring hospital, and checking that patients' treatment plans are being fulfilled.

Then I admit new patients to the critical care unit, either as emergencies or planned admissions, and review referrals from the emergency department and other wards. I also attend different education and clinical governance meetings and lead teaching sessions.

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The best bits and challenges

Interacting with patients is the best part of the job for me. I feel truly privileged to care for some of the most vulnerable patients and their families at such a testing time in their lives.

The most challenging thing is when, despite our best efforts, we're no longer able to sustain life, and meeting with family members to tell them their loved one is unlikely to survive is by far the most difficult aspect. Discussions are obviously very emotional, but I learn so much from the strength that the patient's family and friends show each other at such difficult times.

Life outside work

My favourite hobby is cycling, particularly mountain biking, because it's a wonderful way to 'reset' after a busy time at work. It helps me maintain an active lifestyle outside work which in turn is essential for my health and wellbeing in a busy and sometimes stressful job.

Career plans and top tips for others

Completing my Master's dissertation taught me perseverance, patience and the ability to synthesise research to promote safe and effective evidence-based practice. Receiving my award with my ACCP colleagues at my side was a very proud moment!

In the future, I hope to become an ACCP mentor for our new cohort of trainees and provide peer support through a newly-established regional group.

If you have enthusiasm, perseverance and patience, are passionate about developing your career within the critical care field and enjoy being challenged academically and clinically, advanced critical care practitioner might be a career to consider!

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