Real-life story - Darren Hart

Darren's interest in problem solving and technology as well as his desire to make a difference to the lives of others led him to a career in biomedical engineering.

Darren Hart

Clinical scientist in physiological measurement

Employer or university
Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust
Salary range
£30k-£40k

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How I got into the role

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I've always enjoyed problem solving, technology and understanding how things work. My A-levels choices (maths, electronics, physics) reflected this and naturally led me towards engineering/science through completing an Electronic Engineering degree.

I enjoyed my degree but I was initially unsure how I wanted to apply it to a career. I wanted to do something where I could use my skills to help others. In my third year I met a lecturer with an interest in prosthetic limbs. This made me aware of biomedical engineering and the role of clinical engineers within the NHS. I was fortunate to gain a

Clinical scientist training post at Salisbury District Hospital and things have gone from there.

What I do

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I now work in the Clinical Measurement Department of the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases in Bath. I am part of a team of scientists, radiographers, technicians and administrative staff who provide measurement services that help the diagnosis of conditions or monitor and assess the effects of treatment interventions.

A number of these assessments involve use of thermal imaging and laser Doppler [1] cameras to assess microvascular [2] blood flow in various rheumatic conditions. I am also involved in a number of service improvement and innovation projects. Currently I am working on a software tool which helps ensure patients receive the most appropriate treatment after having had a fracture due to weak bones.

Research is also an important element of my job and it helps us continually ensure that we are providing the most effective patient care. The part-time PhD that I completed alongside my Clinical Scientist training helped me learn about managing and leading projects over a number of years and gave me confidence when discussing and presenting findings.

The best bits and challenges

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The best bit? The feeling that you have used your skills to help someone. I also like the variety of work. One minute I might be using my technical engineering skills at my desk and the next I might be seeing a patient or working as part of a multidisciplinary team.

Time can be the biggest challenge. Sometimes I wish we could just have a bit more time and confidence to pause and reflect on what we do and look at improving the way we work.

Life outside work

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I have a young family so there is rarely a quiet or unaccounted moment. When possible we love to go away in our campervan.

Career plans and top tips for others

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The NHS needs to consider how to respond to future challenges. As part of this I particularly want to help improve my ability to undertake research and apply innovation that helps patients.

Top tips? Find what you enjoy and try to make a career out of it. A genuine interest in people really helps when working in healthcare. You could try and volunteer or get some experience working with patients to see if you enjoy it.

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Doppler [2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Microvascular