

Career Insights

with comments from Lucy Randle, STAR Medical



Joanne Barnes, winner at this year's Pf Awards, has worked as a Clinical Nurse Advisor for four years. She told Pf why she loves her job with AstraZeneca, and why she thinks enthusiasm for what you do is so important.



What do you enjoy most about your job?

Probably the variety. I cover two different disease areas, so I get to meet lots of different people. I also enjoy the autonomy I get in this role, and also the unpredictability, as I never know who I am going to meet. I feel I have been lucky to find a job I actually like.

What do you find challenging?

It's probably the same with all jobs, but I find it frustrating how long things take, so even when a decision has been made it takes a long time for it to be put into action. It is also difficult when people have a lack of enthusiasm for a disease area. GPs have differing agendas and don't always share your enthusiasm for a disease area.

How did it feel to win at the Pf Awards?

It was quite amazing. I was totally caught off guard but thrilled to bits. The fact that I won really is a reflection on my team who supported me, and my manager who was a great source of encouragement.

What do you think it was that made you stand out from the crowd at the assessment day?

After I had got through the screening, I was determined to go into the assessment day just doing my job and not trying to make it something that it wasn't. I think it may have been that honesty that made the difference, as well as my belief in myself and what I'm good at. I think if you are enthusiastic about something you will be good at it.

What advice would you give to someone hoping to excel in a similar role?

Once again, I would say 'Be enthusiastic' – if you don't enjoy what you do you will never succeed at it. In this role you are constantly caught in between the NHS and the pharmaceutical industry, so you've got to be able to think outside the box. You need to put in the work, as nothing is going to come to you without it. Finally, I would emphasise that it is important to know your limitations and be prepared to ask for support when you need it.

Lucy Randle of STAR Medical provides some insight into the role of Nurse Advisors within the industry and gives guidance to those nurses thinking of a career change into the Pharmaceutical industry.

A change of career

For some nurses, the NHS is becoming an increasingly inhospitable place to work – sorely affected by a lack of resources and training opportunities, many sympathise with the popular expression 'overworked and underpaid'. Though some nurses may feel compromised by the prospect of working in a more commercial environment, others relish the challenge.

The role

As a Nurse Advisor you will be an independent advisor, 'sponsored' by a pharmaceutical company. You will remain patient-focused and work in an ethical, non-promotional manner to assess, review and audit hospitals and GP practices. When it is of real benefit, you will switch a patient to your company's product. You may also work closely with PCTs and Health Authorities to develop policies and guidelines.

Experience and qualities

You will already be a Registered Nurse, ideally ENB 998 qualified and a member of the NMC, and you may have the opportunity to become ABPI qualified. Ideally your experience will be in a specialist therapy area, for example diabetes, asthma/COPD or CHD, and you will have gained a qualification in this. You will also be able to demonstrate commercial awareness – you may already have some sales experience, for example. Essentially, you are an excellent communicator, results-driven and self-motivated. You are happy to work autonomously, but also as part of a team.

Good for practices

You will be a valuable resource for many busy GP practices. While the practice members are able to go about their usual business, you can spend time reviewing procedures and implementing best practice. This can result in a significant improvement in patient treatment for the therapy area you are focusing on. You may also spend time educating staff and patients alike about how best to use your product.

Good for pharmaceutical companies

Nurse Advisors work to ensure that their sponsoring pharmaceutical company becomes a leader in the therapy area of focus by setting new standards and innovating.

Good for you

You will be welcomed into practices and make a valuable contribution to staff training and patient health. Your employer will reward you with training, incentives, opportunity for career progression and an attractive salary package in comparison to the NHS.

If you are interested in a change of career, please contact us for access to a broad range of challenging Nurse Advisor roles.

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