

A DAY IN THE LIFE: ANGELA DONLAN



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Abstract:
Welcome to the latest in our 'Day in the Life' articles, where we introduce a member of the Abbott team. This month, we talk to Angela Donlan, one of our Abbott Nurse Advisors, to find out what makes up a typical day for her and what she is most passionate about, both inside and outside of work.

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THE ROLE OF AN ABBOTT NURSE ADVISOR?

I'm based in Manchester and work with the various NHS hospital trusts in the region, as well as in the community with patients at home. Abbott Nurse Advisors work closely with NHS dietitians who refer patients/family members to us who require training in preparation for hospital discharge. This training involves demonstrating the operation, care and maintenance of their equipment and how to care for their feeding tube. We also deliver clinical training to the healthcare professionals who are involved with the patient's care, such as District Nurses or carers.

As part of Abbott's Hospital2Home service, we provide support for patients after they have returned home - such as visiting to help and advise with any challenges they may be facing with their home feeding routine or issues with their feeding tube. We also liaise with community dietitians to handle any queries about Abbott feeds, equipment and patient deliveries.

Ultimately, a big part of our role is enabling patients to leave hospital and continue their care in the comfort of their own homes. We are the first port of call to ensure their transition from acute care is as smooth as possible, that their continued care at home is seamless, and to quickly resolve any issues which might otherwise lead to readmission.

AND WHAT MIGHT A TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

Something I really enjoy about my role is that there isn't really a typical day. I don't have a set daily routine necessarily, every day is different. My morning might start out one way before breaking away to respond to a call and troubleshoot a patient's issue which needs addressing promptly. Having that ability to react quickly and effectively is really important.

Abbott Nurse Advisors also cover an out-of-hours service. So some nights it will be myself on-call to provide support to patients nationwide throughout the night and over weekends, whenever they might need assistance. It's an incredibly beneficial service as we prevent patients from having to go into hospital by supporting with advice over the phone.

WHAT IMPACT DOES YOUR ROLE HAVE ON TRUSTS AND THEIR PATIENTS?

I think the fact that we can respond quickly to help get patients ready and prepared for discharge from hospital is important. Hospitals face all kinds of pressures and so when a patient is considered ready to return home, the fact that we always respond and deliver excellent training quickly is a major benefit in reducing the pressure on hospitals, both in terms of the availability of beds and the general costs involved. On the other side, we have a positive impact for Community Trusts by providing as much support as we do at home, which helps prevent patients from being readmitted.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND? HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH ABBOTT?

I've been with Abbott for 15 years now. My background is in oncology, which has been really beneficial as a large percentage of the patients I look after as an Abbott Nurse Advisor are undergoing cancer treatment.

WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF YOUR ROLE?

When you spend a lot of time with a patient during their treatment, you get to know them really well. You might first meet them in hospital, visit them at home, meet their family, and come to understand what's important to them. Unfortunately in some cases, sadly a patient might deteriorate and eventually die, which is obviously hard to manage. Sometimes you might have a patient who you see regularly for several years, so you become very involved in their lives and build a strong relationship with them.

There are of course many patients that we see who, in time, have a significant improvement from their treatment and have their tube removed – so they no longer need us and we have to say goodbye to them, but thankfully on a positive note.

TELL US ABOUT THE TEAM YOU WORK WITH AT ABBOTT.

I'm in a very unique position as I work with my twin sister, who's an Abbott Nurse Advisor as well. We both cover the Manchester area and the patients get a kick out of it, they refer to us as "the Abbott twins". Everyone should have the opportunity to work with their twin! We're very close.

There's a big team across the country, but we have a local team that works really well to support each other. Our local team keeps in touch during the day to offer help and support as required.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR ROLE?

It's all about the patients. Often they might be a bit nervous when we first meet them because it's all new to them, but we give them the assurance and confidence to go home and manage their own equipment and feed routines. Even if we don't have to see a particular patient very often, we know it's because they're secure in how to feed themselves at home, so it's rewarding to know we helped get them there and to be back in the comfort of their own home. Even better is when we do see patients through to the end of their treatment and a positive outcome; saying goodbye isn't easy but it's a wonderful thing.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF, WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO OUTSIDE OF WORK?

I love being outside so I'm very active, I go for plenty of runs or walks in the fresh air. I like to play rounders, twice a week if the weather permits, and also sing in a choir. We're a big family - including my twin, we see a lot of each other both in and out of work – and we recently had a new addition with my grandson, who I love to spend time with.