

APPRENTICES SUPPORTING THE FRONT LINE COVID-19 EFFORT: A CASE STUDY



Meet Rosemary Fosah an Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) Apprentice at University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (UCLH).

She works within the Acute General Surgery Team at University College Hospitals as a Trainee Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP).

Rosemary's typical responsibilities include: undertaking assessments of acute surgical patients using a range of different assessments and management methods; working flexibly as part of a team whilst acting as a practice leader, managing her own workload and work across professional, organisational and system boundaries to improve patient outcomes by improving timeliness and consistency of care. These responsibilities relate to the four pillars of advanced practice: clinical practice, leadership and management, education and research.



We spoke to Rosemary about how her apprenticeship has supported her employer and patients at this challenging time.

1**How has your role changed as a result of COVID-19?**

We have all had to make changes in dealing with the challenges of the pandemic. Initially, I was redeployed to support the ward management team on one of our surgical wards turn Covid Ward.

Currently, I am providing cover on the 'Matron of the Day' rota, which looks at daily staffing to ensure that all clinical areas have the right number of staff with the right skill mix to care for our patients. As you may appreciate, just a few weeks ago this was a huge undertaking trying to match staffing needs with patient acuity across the different clinical areas which was constantly changing.

2**How did you feel about this? Do you feel your apprenticeship has helped you to prepare for these unprecedented times?**

Reflecting on it, I would say nervous and anxious like most people at the start of the pandemic due to the uncertainty and scale of what we were facing.

This coincided with the early stages of my apprenticeship programme at City, University of London. It has undoubtedly given me confidence to take on new challenges and to make my voice heard when needed.

I am on another journey of professional development, and I dare say personal in trying to balance work, studying and family life. Feeling grateful and lucky to have the support of my line manager, senior management team and supervisors to navigate through it.

3**How will your experiences contribute to your apprenticeship and learning when you return to programme?**

I have had to realign my learning objectives over this period to focus on some aspects and not so much on others. The standout area has been leadership and management skills in supporting the management team and covering the matron's rota. I have used this as new learning opportunities, some of which would contribute towards off-the-job training.

4**How did you get into your current role?**

Last summer I finished a secondment for a role as a senior nurse with the patient flow team supporting the clinical areas to embed the new process with the Electronic Health Record System (EPIC) and other projects such as Length of Stay (LoS) reviews for patients, and weekend cover for support services.

I felt I could do more, offer more, had more to learn!!.... A seed had been planted.

The opportunity for a pilot was presented to do some audit work on the surgical emergency pathway to identify themes, areas for improvement and mechanisms for bringing them about. This evolved into the role of a trainee ANP for which I applied and was successful.

5 What education/training did you receive prior to starting your Level 7 apprenticeship?

I worked for 8 years as a Vascular Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) with my own case load running a surveillance programme for aortic aneurysms, inpatient cases and nurse-led vascular OP clinics, including a diabetic foot MDT clinic.

My qualifications include Advanced Assessment Skills for Non-Medical Practitioners Level 7 and an MSc in Public Health/Health Promotion.

I am now enrolled on the full MSc ACP programme. Due to the change of specialty, I feel I will massively benefit from the full course rather than APEL some modules.

6 What does a typical day look like for you?

My typical day starts with acute inpatients reviews and onto Emergency Department (ED) referrals.

The day begins with a handover between 07:30 / 08:00 am, and proceeds to a ward round and follow-up actions. Next, onto a review of the previous day's activities and clinical / non-clinical admin duties.

When operational, the mornings would include a General Surgery Hot Clinic.

The focus then shifts to ED referrals for general surgery consultation. Activity from ED referrals starts to pick up between 11- midday and peaks over the course of late afternoon/early evening.

7 What challenges have you faced so far?

Navigating the challenges of establishing a new role within an existing team.

Moving from an expert as a Vascular CNS to what felt like a novice with the change of role / specialty.

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What are you most proud of?

I have enjoyed being a nurse for quite a few years, so difficult to choose. It has been most rewarding to be able to support patients fully understand their diagnosis and work through their concerns, to help facilitate their recovery / health optimisation. Continuing to develop my knowledge, skills and experience would absolutely benefit the patients in my care.

Having said that, I would hand pick the following:

- Within my role as Vascular CNS, establishing a very accessible, efficient, and effective vascular nurse service that met the needs of patients.
- The decision to embark on another MSc programme which was borne out of an increased sense of self efficacy and motivation from the exemplar leadership of those around me over the last year.
- However, most recently it has been to be part of the team at UCLH during this pandemic whose stories, experiences, spirit of solidarity and support for each other continue to inspire me.

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Where do you see yourself in the future?

Fully credentialed ACP with a high clinical profile working to ensure the provision of effective and efficient care with improved outcomes for patients.

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What advice do you have for people looking to do the same apprenticeship as you?

Ensure you have a supportive team around you including a line-manager and supervisor to facilitate and nurture your development of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to practice with a high degree of autonomy combined with complex decision making.

I cannot over emphasize the support required throughout the course from all the team you work with daily. It is important that they all recognise and acknowledge your **learner status**, and support you in your learning.