

## Internship case study

### Katie Bell

#### Background

I'm a critical care nurse working at University Hospital Manchester. I qualified as a nurse in September 2013 and six months into my role I heard about the Care Makers research internship opportunity\* and applied. I have always been interested in research since being an undergraduate and this seemed like the perfect opportunity to gain more insight into research and expand my skills further.



#### About the project

As my clinical background is in cardiac and lung surgery, heart and lung transplants and respiratory problems I decided to centre my project on an area I had some knowledge and experience in. I wanted to align my research to Compassion in Practice action areas 2 & 3. Due to the volume of information available and after valuable discussions and guidance from my mentor, we agreed I would conduct a narrative review on the evidence base for three areas:

- Patient experience of cardiac surgery;
- Patient experience measurement; and
- Nursing care.

#### About my internship

At the beginning of the project I was assigned a mentor. This was Veronica Swallow, Senior Lecturer in Child Nursing at the University of Manchester. I met with Veronica every two to three weeks to discuss the project, challenges and any issues. Working with Veronica really helped me. She had a similar background and interest in research and was able to identify and relate to some of my challenges. There was a vast amount of information available for me to research, Veronica helped me define my research topics and what was realistically achievable within 48 days.

\* The Care Makers internship scheme was a single cohort in 2014, as part of the East Midlands ICA internship scheme

## Timings

I agreed with my trust the timings and dates for the project, which required 48 days to be taken during a six month period. I started in May 2014 and finished the project in December 2014. The trust received funding for the full 48 days which I spent on the project which meant they were able to support my application. Dates were flexible and I split my time spending three days in my clinical role and two days working on the project from home. This worked well and I continued to receive support from my trust throughout the project.

## Development

I had the opportunity to attend four academic development days at The University of Leicester which covered specific skills relevant to the project. These included research skills, reporting writing skills, presentation skills and poster presentation skills. These training days cemented my existing research knowledge and were a great revision. Not only did I enhance my skills during the days, they also gave me the opportunity to meet other Care Makers on the programme and also other like-minded professionals who were also passionate about research.

## Outputs

I had to be quite disciplined with myself and focus on the agreed criteria as there was so much information available. I produced a 7000 word dissertation which was a narrative review, structured around my research on the evidence base across the three areas around cardiac surgery and patient experience.

As part of my internship I was asked to deliver a presentation at the Care Makers strategy board meeting in December 2014 at the end of my internship; this was quite nerve racking. However the board were very supportive and are going to approach the Nursing Standard on my behalf with a view to publishing my research.

I also plan to approach other journals with regards to publishing my findings which I feel could really benefit others. I have learnt so much doing the research and I really want to share this knowledge and learning with others. I am currently working with my mentor who has agreed to co-author my final report for publishing, which will also add credibility.

## Benefits

My biggest learning was around how much you can achieve in 48 days with support, guidance and structure. I feel I have achieved so much. By participating in the research project it has reassured me that I do want to be a research nurse. The training I received on the academic days gave me some great insight into research policy and frameworks. This proved invaluable when I recently attended a job interview for a role as research nurse and was able to apply the knowledge and experience I gained during the internship. I was subsequently offered the job and start in January 2015. A great result!

I hope to continue my learning in research and plan to apply for a Masters in Research Methods to start in September 2015.

### **Dr Veronica Swallow, Senior Lecturer, Nursing & Midwifery, University of Manchester**

“Katie was a real pleasure to support on the internship. Her literature review has provided the rigorous groundwork for future research that she will be ideally placed to carry out if she progresses to undertaking a PhD. Katie is an excellent role model for other nurses wishing to apply for the internship scheme.”