

Responding to COVID-19

AHP student case study

Zahra Fazal
3rd Year Physiotherapy student,
Coventry University

What went through your mind when you realised COVID-19 would significantly impact the UK?

Scared for family and friends but I knew I couldn't just sit by and watch. I wanted to be an active part.

What were your options in responding to COVID-19?

Stay safe with my family and complete university assignments or sign myself up to work for the NHS.

What was your decision?

I had the skills and I had been working towards working for the NHS for as long as I could remember. It was a no brainer and for me it was also a religious quote that motivated me "save one life and it though you have saved the whole of humanity" and as a physiotherapist I felt it was important to give back and help those in need. I was fortunate to have family and friends that supported my decision despite them knowing the risk to them. Without them I know it would have not been possible for me to work through this pandemic.



Where have you been placed and what are you doing?

I am fortunate to be working at the Evington Centre Community Hospital in a medical step down unit. I have been helping patients from all backgrounds mostly geriatrics but a variety of conditions, some of whom have had COVID-19 are requiring the longer term rehabilitation to return to their baseline. My job entails working with patients to restore previous mobility, aiding with discharge and supporting them along their journey.

What is your day to day like?

It's busy, trying to fit all the patients, induction and learning into a very short time. Every day is a new and challenging day and I look forward to it. The job can be challenging as no two patients are the same. There's a lot to learn and it often requires reading over some of the conditions we may have learnt at university. A lot of therapy is beneficial in a group but due to this crisis we've had to adapt and tailor the work to individuals. This often means I have to think of new exercises for the patient in their room with minimal equipment and that is safe.

What do you think you have learnt during this extraordinary time?

A lot! I've learnt the kindness of people who have been incredibly supportive and also, the importance of supporting each other. I have also learnt that the physiotherapy workforce has been so cohesive and supportive with staff of all backgrounds. The crisis has not only made us more interconnected but has created cross trust platforms, this has been evident in the online AHP, Medical and Nursing community.

How do you think this will prepare you for your career?

Working through the pandemic has made me reflect on the kind of clinician I would like to be. It has been a start in the deep end but has made me eager to look forward the challenges to come. The skills learnt i.e. constant adapting and being innovative will be skills that I know will be of benefit in the future. One of the biggest learning experiences has been through the challenge of communicating and using your eyes and body language. Although it was difficult to grasp initially, it has become much easier and I know that it has only made me a better clinician for it.

How have you found this experience personally?

The experience has been a roller-coaster of emotions, but I have loved every minute of it. I have learned to appreciate my education and the team around me. Amidst all hard challenges, the reward of seeing a patient discharged reminds me exactly why I wake up each day and do a job that I am so fortunate to love. I look forward to the same experience without such a dark time shadowing over it.