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**Katie Clive**

**Macmillan Therapy Assistant Practitioner.**

My career as a support worker started in 2000 where I worked in Cheltenham General Hospital, gaining experience working in different specialities. My current role is a Macmillan therapies assistant practitioner for a community cancer rehabilitation team. Working alongside physiotherapists and dietitians, I am encouraged to voice any new ideas and approaches to meet patient’s needs and to help streamline the service.

My role allows me to help provide a holistic approach to patient care and rehabilitation post cancer.

All aspects of my role involve supporting patients to make healthy lifestyle changes and assisting them with behaviour change, to enable them to live well beyond cancer diagnosis and into the future. From my previous AHP Support worker role in the hospital, I learnt so many transferrable skills that I am able to utilise in my current community-based rehabilitation role. Gaining so much experience from working in Oncology with the physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists.

Part of the attraction was the challenge of switching mindset from working with patients who are still in treatment to working with patients who are at the end of treatment and seeking support with their recovery and beyond.

I have always enjoyed working as part of a multidisciplinary team. Working as an AHP support worker has provided me with the opportunity to work with different Allied Health Professionals such as, physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Dietitians, and Radiographers.

Ultimately the satisfaction of supporting patients when they really need it, making a difference to people during their recovery, and seeing the progress patients make following advice and interventions you provide is a massive reason why I enjoy my role.

Finally to have the opportunity to be a part of starting up a new team and the challenges it brought, I found an exciting and attractive prospect. The team is always evolving and progressing and continues to be an exciting team to work in.

During the last 7 years there have been many opportunities for development. I have completed several training programmes and courses which have all helped me to develop in my AHP therapies assistant practitioner role.

Some of the courses have included:

Macmillan HOPE and Take Control training, this allows me to deliver patient group workshops which provides coping strategies and self-management tips on managing the common side effects of cancer and treatments.

Motivational Interviewing course and Level 2 psychology skills training, both provided the education to better manage conversations around behaviour change required during patient 1:1 appointments but also during patient workshops/courses.

I completed an EWBL (evidence work based learning) degree module at Bristol university. For this module I researched the difficulties and concerns that patients experience when returning to work after cancer. This module also allowed me to not only develop new skills but an insight at studying at degree level.

Over the past few years my role has included running a circuit style exercise class for patients. Since starting this role I have completed my Level 2 gym instructor and Level 3 personal training qualification, but have also completed 2 level 4 fitness instructor specialism qualifications, one being CanRehab Level 4 which allows me to work with people who have a diagnosis of cancer and the other being a level 4 Weight Loss Specialist instructor qualification.

The personal training and level 4 specialism qualifications are proving invaluable in ensuring I provide safe, effective and appropriate exercise programmes both on a 1:1 basis but also in-patient group circuit classes too.

There has been so much that I have achieved over the past 7 years that I feel proud of, but here are a few examples:

I have been able to adapt and challenge myself in ways that I haven’t done so before, and one of the promises I made to myself when starting with my current team is to take on any training offered to me to support the development of this role and team.

I thrive off being able to provide holistic patient therapy input and being able to see the progress and improvements that patients make as a result of advice and support I provide.

It gives me a huge sense of pride seeing that there was a need that wasn’t being met in the service. The need was to provide holistic approached 1:1 fatigue appointments. I approached my service lead and discussed that patients would benefit from 1:1 bespoke fatigue advice, and have since developed a successful fatigue clinic which I run weekly. I have had lots of positive feedback from patients I have supported and helped them to better manage their energy levels, so they can return to work, previous activities and improve their quality of life.

Qualifying as a personal trainer has broadened my patient interventions, and provided me with the opportunity to work with the physiotherapist in a slightly different way to provide safe effective and appropriate personal training programmes on a 1:1 basis.

I also now provide the unique approach of combining fatigue management with increasing physical activity and strength programmes.

Having the opportunity to work with the team cancer specialist dietitian to co-develop and write a 5 week Healthy eating management/nutrition and physical activity course, with the aims that patients will increase cardiovascular fitness, strength, and reduce fatigue, weight and waist circumference to reduce the risk of cancer recurrence and mortality in the future, and enable the patient to live will following cancer.

Support workers have the benefit of spending more time to get to know their patients and are able to build a real rapport with them, which I see as a privilege.

There are a wide range of areas and ways a support worker can work in, depending on the team and specialty.

There are often lots of training and development opportunities to help further develop yourself to improve the care you provide.

Personally I have had the privilege of working with so many Allied Health Professionals during the last 20 years of my NHS career, which has led me to learn so much and develop into the AHP support worker I am today.

I would encourage anyone to become an AHP support worker if you like to learn, enjoy working with people and seeing the positive changes that can be made with the support you provide.

“If you like to help people at a time they need support to help them reach their goals to live well, do it!”

Feedback written from an anonymous patient I supported for weight management and to improve fitness and strength

“Being diagnosed with cancer was a shock as I was told everything was fine, then out of nowhere my oncology nurse phoned to say I had cancer and she needed me to be checked over to make sure everything was alright.

I asked my nurse if there was a financial advisor I could speak to and she referred me to Maggie's, there I was supported with all sorts of things and I was also referred to Macmillan Next Steps to see the physio as I wasn't able to stand for more than a few minutes at a time before I had to sit down because I was in so much pain.

After seeing the physio at Next Steps and being shown how to do strengthening exercises for my core and back my pain levels were much better due to this I was able to regain some of my independence as I was able to stand for longer which enabled me to do more things including cooking.  As I had shown that I was progressing well with the exercises I had been given it was agreed that I could move on to the next step which is where I met Katie.

With Katie's help I have continued to do a selection of exercises to strengthen and tone which has been really helpful as it has effectively given me my life back.   I find it easier to do things and I am able to stand for longer which means that I don't get so tired, I go out more and I have even managed to go back to work part - time after a 2 year absence.

Seeing the results of all the support Katie has given me has encouraged me to work hard at getting back on track with my weight loss as by doing the exercises she has supported me to do shows, where as before it was not noticed.  When people started to notice that I had lost weight it gave my confidence a huge boost.  With Katie's support I have changed my eating habits and I do more exercise which has meant that my health has benefited too, my blood pressure is lower and my diabetes is in remission.

Having the support of Katie and the team at Macmillan Next Steps has been incredible, without everyone's care and attention to my needs I would not be as well as I am.”

Completing this form has made me re-evaluate the importance of AHP support workers and what a difference we can make to people’s lives.