



Imperial College
Academic Health
Science Centre
Improving Patient Care

RESEARCH
CAREERS
CASE STUDY



ANN MULS
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NURSE

RESEARCH: USING AN ELECTRONIC NOSE TO PREDICT GASTROINTESTINAL CONSEQUENCES OF PELVIC RADIOTHERAPY IN WOMEN WITH A GYNAECOLOGICAL MALIGNANCY.

How did you get into research?

I have always felt that research should be part of any health care professional's activities as it is vital to inform and improve health care provision. I have always been active in audits since qualifying and was fortunate to undertake some research when doing my MSc.

I was awarded an NIHR/HEE Clinical Doctoral Research Fellowship in 2015 to undertake a PhD.

My current team is very research active and this has provided me with practical experience in setting up studies, collecting data, analysing and publishing the outcomes.

What do you enjoy about research?

I have an inquisitive mind and I find it really exciting that if you are lucky, you may find some answers to a particular question. Mostly, it will result in more questions, but that opens up more possibilities.

What was the most difficult aspect of doing your PhD?

I have just started the third year of my PhD. I am doing this part-time over 5 years and still working clinically alongside. It can be challenging as I need to be quite flexible to be able to meet the research participants when they come in for an appointment while continuing my clinical role. In addition, managing my own and others' expectations about what you will be able to continue to do compared to what you used to. Needing to learn to say 'no' which is hard.

What difference has your research training and experience made to your career?

It has made me a more rounded health care professional. I have developed critical thinking skills which allow me to be able to question the status quo. It has also given me the experience and skills to support others to undertake their own research.

What has made a difference to progressing your research career?

Being awarded the NIHR fellowship has been instrumental, this has enabled me to have back fill for my post, which has reduced the pressures from a clinical perspective. I have a fantastic team of experienced academic supervisors who have been incredibly supportive.

Also, I have learned that perseverance is key, the ability to keep going even when things don't seem to be going as you planned is really vital.

Where do you see your clinical academic career going over the next five years?

I hope to finish my PhD in 3 years time with the view of applying to a post-doctoral research programme so that I can continue clinical research.

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