



**Imperial College**  
Academic Health  
Science Centre  
Improving Patient Care



## Dr Helen Jones

Lead Nurse for the Clinical Research Workforce

### RESEARCH: SUPPORTING RESEARCH TEAMS ACROSS CLINICAL RESEARCH DELIVERY

#### *How did you get into research?*

My route into clinical research nursing was coincidental, I'd been working in different areas of cardiac nursing when I saw a job advert for a Cardiac Research Nurse. I didn't know much about the role but thought it sounded interesting and different to what I was doing. I applied on the off chance and was delighted when I got the role

#### *What do you enjoy about research?*

I enjoy seeing the development of new treatments which will benefit patients, as well as providing new treatment options. Clinical Research Nurses can also develop a unique relationship with their patients as they may be followed up for a number of months or consent into successive studies. I've also enjoyed doing my own research, especially data collection and those light bulb moments when the data suddenly reveals something.

#### *What was the most difficult aspect of doing your PhD?*

Juggling everything! I worked full time and had 3 young children when I started my Doctoral programme. I needed to identify times when I would be able to focus on my work, especially when I did my data collection - which required nights away - so it was a family effort to ensure everything was covered at home.

#### *What was the most challenging aspect of continuing your research after completing your PhD?*

Doing a Doctorate, alongside working full time and home responsibilities, I found that once I had completed everything I needed to focus back on my job for a while and time to decide how I wanted to progress. Still working in clinical research, I was now in a management role, so I knew I wanted to use my experience to support other staff to develop clinical academic careers.

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

It's opened doors and helped me progress in ways I didn't anticipate when I qualified. It's given me a different perspective to nursing and helped me to gain a real understanding of evidence-based care and the impact research has on our patients. It has signposted a range of career options and enabled me to support other nurses to pursue research opportunities.

#### *What do you think is the greatest misconception about clinical academia?*

I think many nurses think that it isn't for them as they don't have the right skills or experience. This may often be because the opportunity has not presented itself yet. However, I would encourage all health professionals to seek out training programmes that help them build their research knowledge and experience. At Imperial we're lucky as staff can access training through the Clinical Academic Training Office (CATO).

#### *How has research changed your clinical practice?*

Research has made me more aware of delivering evidence-based care. It's also highlighted the progress that has been made across healthcare, especially when I think back to some of the things I was taught as a student. I'm more passionate about promoting the importance of research both to research staff and across nursing. It has helped me develop as a nurse and enabled me to be more discerning in the decisions I've made.

#### *What has made a difference to progressing your research career?*

Access to funding and great support. Throughout my time as a research nurse I have been able to access funding to complete academic programmes which have helped progress my career. Linked to this, I have received support from my managers and mentors who have been key in my development. More recently I was part of the NIHR 70@70 Senior Research Leader programme. This enabled me to network and learn from other nurse/midwife researchers from around the country, as well as exposing me to inspirational speakers and role models who inspired me to progress.

#### *Where do you see your clinical academic career going over the next 5 years?*

I plan to continue working in research delivery and support research teams. I also hope to continue being involved in my own research and possibly lead on an academic grant application. I enjoy supporting others to develop their research skills and experience and hope to support staff within research delivery teams to apply for fellowship opportunities, ultimately enabling others to develop clinical academic careers. I may also pursue a more national role if the opportunity arises.

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