

Experience at Sandwell General Hospital.

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I commenced my duties at Sandwell General Hospital, West Bromwich on 15th July as a Rheumatologist Occupational Therapist Senior II grade. My work period terminated on the 14th December. My duties at the above post included:

- Assessment of all arthritis patients and Connective Tissue Disorder patients.
- Manufacturing of various hand splints for the above-mentioned patients from different materials.
- Offering review appointments to patients who had attended the Rheumatology Department/ Sandwell General Hospital in the past.
- Giving advice regarding joint protection techniques and energy conservation techniques.
- Actively involved in RA educational groups with the Rheumatologist specialist, nurses and physiotherapist.
- Carrying out home visits and follow up home visits to fit equipment and aids.

- Assessment for equipment and supplying/ training of use of equipment to patients as required.
- Actively involved in research and discussion in the journal club and clinical governance meetings on a monthly basis.
- Attending in-service training sessions held by Sandwell NHS Trust.
- Attending multidisciplinary meetings for the Rheumatology teams of Birmingham City Hospital and Sandwell General Hospital in view of future merger, every month.
- Orientation visit to Heartlands Hospital in Birmingham.
- Attending NAROT (National Association of Rheumatology Occupational Therapist) Annual General Meeting and seminar at Edgebaston.
- Carrying out evidence based practice study on thumb orthosis during a weekly half day study day allocated (A practical research project will follow this study in Malta in the future)
- Attending ward rounds on N4 every Wednesday afternoon.
- In service talk given to colleagues on Scleroderma.

- Working on my personal development file for half a day each month.
- Attending monthly meetings with a senior I O.T. as part of the Staff Support Service.

For the first ten days I was involved in a local induction-training course, headed by Ms Penny Staples and other Occupational Therapists working at both outpatient level (hand clinic, orthopaedic) and inpatient level Wards. Computer training with the input clerk at the department was also included. Later I worked with a member of the primary Care team working in the community. A week long corporate induction course followed in August, and the venues chosen were Rowley Regis Hospital and Sandwell General Hospital. This included all information required on administration, patient handling techniques, a first aid course on CPR, ethnic issues training and a food and hygiene training course. Both these training courses are mandatory for all the staff. Other training including fire-training sessions, use of library resources, Internet (WISH) and hoist training. Throughout my work period the

Occupational Health Unit closely monitored my vaccinations and health status. The monthly staff support meetings were conducted by Ms Penny Staples and later by Ms Helen Bessant.

From 16th July till the 23rd October I formed part of a team of three Rheumatologist O.T's. The other members were a Senior I O.T. and a Senior II O.T. I built up the practice and the confidence working with in this team so that when I was left on my own I had the skills to manage the caseload of three therapists well. From 10th December to the 14th December I had another Senior I OT, joined me. She was taking the caseload of the Rheumatology Section after I left.

During my work period at Sandwell General Hospital, I formed part of a multidisciplinary team, which consisted of: two Rheumatologist Consultants, two Rheumatologist nurses, and two physiotherapists. Although forming part of this team, I was based at the occupational therapy department of Sandwell General Hospital. The weekly ward round facilitated communication and the team was very supportive and

important for me both in carrying out my job satisfactorily and to fulfil the patient's charter followed at the hospital.

Conclusion.

In my opinion, I would have never had the opportunity to learn so much had I not visited Sandwell General Hospital. This work and study phase has been a very positive experience and knowledge, which are very important to me in giving

a better service. I know I can work better now as a Rheumatologist Occupational Therapist than I did before. I wish to thank the Department of Health for giving me the opportunity to temporarily be dismissed from my duties in Malta. Also I wish to thank Sandwell NHS Trust for accepting me to carry out this work/study at Sandwell General Hospital. Most of all I wish to thank Ms Penny Staples for being the contact person who made it all possible.

**THANK YOU TO THE
CONTRIBUTORS OF
OUR JOURNAL**