

Next Gen Nabs

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What role(s) do you hold at the moment?

I am now working as an academic GP - so I run the Clinical Practice component of the BSMS undergraduate course as one of their senior lecturers, and spend 2 days a week in clinical practice. Just back in December I changed jobs, stepping down from my role as Local Medical Director – which was hard to do, but absolutely the right decision: I have since joined a small family practice, and feel right at home.



What brings you the most joy at work?

The balance of the two different aspects of my working week keep me on my toes and ensure that I never get bored of either. The best bits in GP are when I feel like I have made a difference to someone...sometimes that can be from being clever (or more likely lucky) with a diagnosis, sometimes (more often) it can come from just being, on 'their side' and listening. The university work is challenging and keeps me learning about leading growing and dynamic teams, especially in light of shifting sands, pressures and goal posts (having to re-write an entire term of teaching to work virtually in just a couple of weeks, with no access to the usual university resources, is just one such challenge)!

What is your biggest challenge?

One of the hardest things I have had to do is join an organisation in a leadership role, just as a programme of re-inspection is begun by the CQC. Some aspects of the organisation had been rated as needing special measures, whereas others were 'unsatisfactory'. I had never had anything to do with a CQC inspection before, and felt many many pairs of eyes looking to me to see where it would go this time.

What I found made the best difference for me (I guess, compared to what people had experienced before in the organisation) was going in with a view that 'nobody is as clever as everyone' (least of all me) – so to get the team to share their ideas, concerns and wisdom. The nurses were worried that some numbers relating to their work didn't seem to tally with their experience, some of our admin team had great ideas about how to set up systems for recalling patients on certain registers. Taking all this on, I found that the way data had been managed and collected mis-represented immunisation and cancer screening rates, and found that there were some clunky bits of processes that were getting in the way of proactively caring for some patients with chronic diseases...most of which were easy to implement once the ideas were laid out and shared.

What's the best leadership/career advice you've ever received?

Be approachable. Be kind. Listen, and help people to feel heard and valued. Also: follow your gut. If something doesn't feel right, it quite probably isn't.

Who do you look up to?

Gosh... this caught me out – tricky, as it is so easy to compare yourself to others and massively admire what they do...but this can be a double edged sword, and sometimes I think we can often ache to emulate something that is not reasonable for us to follow in our own pair of shoes (if that metaphor makes sense)... There are some incredible academics and clinicians that I admire, and sometimes would love to be more like... but actually, I think it is important to acknowledge that it is ok to really appreciate bits of lots of different people you see around you... without necessarily holding that image as an icon on a pedestal to which you wish to aspire...

What would you like to achieve by the end of your career?

Gosh... at the moment it is difficult to think beyond next month... World Peace?no, but seriously: I would hope that my work within medical education and community healthcare would see a positive change in the way wider determinants of health are recognised and addressed, especially for marginalised groups. This touches on some of the curriculum reforms I have led in undergraduate medical education, and some of the work I have done with the RCGP and UK government on LGBT+ health inequalities.

What have you learned about yourself in lockdown?

Ugh...that I am nowhere near as good at baking as I thought I was... Also (shock) I am too much of a social being to thrive in isolation!

What are you reading at the moment?and (no judgement) the last film you watched....

My brother bought me a book called Straight Jacket, although I am making slow progress with it. It does touch on many shared experiences in the gay community and offers some poignant observations. The last film I watched was Hidden Figures. I absolutely love Octavia Spencer, and she is just fabulous in this film – although it does (along with The Help) hold up a mirror to us as a species – how we treat others...there is a risk of seeing some of those patterns as being relegated to the 'past'...somehow distant from our concern and responsibility...but there are troubling ripples to be seen in the present day at home as well as farther afield...