

Our South West nursing and midwifery people

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On a typical day

There are just two of us covering a large geographical area and two acute Trusts. This means that whilst each day has a work plan, I never really know what will happen or where I'll end up. Starting at 07:00 there are a plethora of messages and actions from the previous day's work along with a new batch of referrals to triage. My colleague and I discuss the most urgent developments and agree how we will tackle these. Because of the threat to patient and public health, new potential cases of TB take priority over existing work. This frequently means that whilst I hoped to further a policy, education session or paper, I end up at a person's home to initiate TB treatment and risk assess the need/scale/urgency of contact tracing (those that will need to be traced and screened) or perhaps tracking a homeless person down, coordinating appropriate investigations, arranging emergency accommodation and access to drug and alcohol services to get that person to a safe enough point where they can safely start TB treatment. It's a wonderful job but you need to be highly flexible and learn to cope with unrelenting pressure from all directions.



One of the ways I've made a difference as a nurse or midwife

Prior to training as a nurse in Southampton, I spent a year in Southern Africa and following the Romanian revolution, a few months working in one of their orphanages. These experiences kindled a belief that professional nursing knowledge and skills need to be shared globally, perhaps now more than ever.

After gaining A&E experience and completing a course in Tropical Medicine, I was privileged to spend a year working alongside Paediatric and E.D nurses in the Gaza Strip with Medical Aid for Palestinians. Whilst we certainly helped to improve immediate patient care, in hindsight many of the long-term improvements such as establishing post-graduate education programmes were continually being eroded through the on-going military conflict with Israel.



After this I joined Medicines Sans Frontieres. My first posting was in a Siberian Gulag where a small international team initiated and supervised treatment for 1800 prisoners with Multidrug-Resistant TB. I found that mission rather oppressive but a personal legacy from this was the establishment of Russian TB Nurse Supervisor education which was later cascaded throughout the country and the Head nurse awarded in Geneva by the WHO.

After this I was posted to Southern Sudan to lead a team running a small bush Hospital and Feeding Centre in a remote refugee camp. We successfully treated several hundreds of people and fed a lot more. The project sadly ended after Government backed militia attacked and killed around 20 people. After escaping into the bush for a few hours we returned and treated the survivors, some of whom were able to successfully evacuate by plane a few days later. But the on-going threat of further attacks spelt the end of our mission and I later returned to the UK to settle and develop specialist skills.

What would you say to someone considering a career in nursing & midwifery?

Go for it! Although the pay does not reflect the responsibility you will have, the people you will help and the difference your actions will make to their lives is far more important than a high salary. Nursing is one of the most important and rewarding jobs out there. Grasp it and run with it, you won't regret it!

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