A Day In The Life Of A Practice Nurse

Hello, My name is Ann-Marie Robertson, and I am one of the 4 practice nurses here at Caen Medical Centre. 3 Health Care Assistants and 2 Receptionists who work as Phlebotomists for approximately an hour each per week complete the team. We are all part time, but between us we cover the treatment room requirements of 2 practice nurses and at least 1 HCA throughout the day.

My day starts at 8:15 when I set up the treatment room ready for the day’s onslaught! Generally, the day has up to 37 appointments of 10 minutes each. These single appointments are usually sufficient for injections, simple dressings, pre-coil swabs, ear irrigation, stitch and clip removals, hypertension reviews, baby immunisations, adult immunisations, for example: the shingles vaccine for the elderly and the whooping cough vaccine for pregnant ladies.

20 minute appointments are needed for cervical screening, chronic disease reviews like asthma, diabetes, heart and kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, (known as copd), complex dressings and travel consultations with vaccinations and arrangement of malarial cover.

A few longer appointments are required for Doppler (ultrasound) testing, spirometry with reversibility, and bilateral leg ulcers needing compression bandaging.

We have control of some appointments to book or rebook patients who we feel may need extra time.

The workload in the treatment room is fairly heavy and at times can be pretty hectic with emergencies which could be anything from a child’s grazed knee to a serious cardiac event required resuscitation and /or hospital admission. In between, there may be blood tests and ECGs sent round from the Doctors, minor illnesses and injuries, anaphylaxis. The workload is affected by season also, school holidays and the summer season brings many visitors to Braunton and therefore more workload for the treatment room. Because of these factors a practice nurse has to be flexible and be able to adapt and respond to any new challenge. The key to making this a success is teamwork!

The practice nurse role has developed from the old treatment room nurse role which was more of a Doctor’s assistant and in this surgery, the role is well respected and valued. We still do assist the Doctors with such things as minor ops and chaperoning We have a good relationship with all other employees in the surgery. The Doctors respect our skill sets and trust our opinions. This, in turn, means that we strive to develop our skills. Each of us have our own areas of expertise and interest; for example, I came from a background of 15 years in A&E, so I’m accomplished in suturing and removing various Foreign Bodies from various orifices! Suturing is
something I would like to do more of but time currently doesn’t allow. One of our PNs was a District Nurse, so she is leg ulcer specialist and another practice nurse specialises in COPD.

The practice nurse role also has a pastoral element in that we develop relationships with patients over periods of time. We all have our regulars who always book with a particular practice nurse and this helps in the continuity of delivery of care, particularly the teaching aspect.

Outside of appointments, a practice nurse attends meeting like critical event meetings, integrated nurse meetings, patient focus groups,. We do clinical audits m input and update protocols m and do the general maintenance of the treatment room such as restocking, ordering, control sterile supplies and cleaning. We constantly ensure that CQC standards are met.

All specimens that come in to the surgery go through the treatment room. We do some testing, ensure that appropriate receptacles are used and the correct paperwork and labelling is attached and send them off to their appropriate destinations.

A few other procedures we do involve referring patients to smoking cessation clinics, diabetes education classes and chiropodists. We give contraceptive advice, do coil checks, give long acting contraceptive injections and pregnancy testing. We also give dietary advice, nutrition and exercise advice and help with weight loss.

All being well, my day finishes at 6pm, this is by no means an exhaustive list of a practice nurse’s day but I hope it does give you a flavour of our role.

Thank you.