

on the frontline

We talk to **Kate Walker** about her work as a practice nurse

What area of nursing are you in?

I'm currently a practice nurse in Camden, London

Why did you choose this speciality?

I didn't... It found me! I actually trained as a paediatric nurse and worked in a London hospital as a staff nurse and then as a junior Sister. It was only after completing my master's degree in Global Health and Development last

year, that I realised my passion lay in public health. In trying to find ways to build up public health experience, I stumbled into practice nursing and haven't looked back since!

What motivates you in your job?

Knowing that I am helping patients make positive changes to their lives and delivering interventions which can prevent and reduce disease and disability.

What does a typical day look like for you?

Whilst the structure of my day is consistent (ten or twenty minute consultations with patients from 9am until approximately 5pm) the content varies a lot. A typical morning or afternoon could consist of dressings, travel advice/ vaccinations, smear tests, chronic disease management (COPD/diabetes/ asthma), smoking cessation advice... any number of things! I also run a weekly baby clinic and women's health clinic.

What are the particular challenges about your job?

I am the only nurse in the practice four out of five days a week, so I find it hard not having another nurse to bounce ideas off. I also find that I am treated like another GP by both patients and colleagues — so I have to be really aware of my limitations and boundaries.

What are the blessings of your job?

First and foremost it would have to be my relationship with patients. I feel so fortunate to be in a position where I can love and serve people, to act as Christ's hands and feet, and hopefully deliver the compassion they deserve. I'm also blessed with having great colleagues and a wonderful social life... no nights or weekends for me!

How did you find the transition from student to qualified nursing?

Scary! The transition was slow, as I took a year out after qualifying to volunteer abroad and then spent the first year in an outpatients' department. Stepping back on to the ward after two years away was terrifying and a definite drop in the deep end, but I was fortunate to have really supportive colleagues and a fantastic mentor.

Any advice for student nurses and midwives reading this?

You can do it! We've all been there and know how daunting the transition is. The key is to recognise that you're not expected to know it all. Acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills takes time, so treat it as such; pick a skill or disease to focus on each week and build from there.

What can we be praying for you?

I find it all too easy to sit back in the slow lane and just meet each day as it comes. Please pray that I may be motivated to maximise the opportunities my role provides, to strive for excellence in practice and have the energy and enthusiasm to serve my patients wholeheartedly, just as Jesus would do. 🌸