**Georgina:**

Hi, I’m Georgina Norris and I’m the Patient & Public Involvement and Engagement Co-ordinator for the NIHR Cambridge Biomedical Research Centre. Over a series of podcasts we’ll talk to some of our research staff about their career paths, and for this year’s International Women’s Day where better to start than our research nurses Diana, Rosemary and Cyra, who are based in the NIHR Cambridge Clinical Research Facility.

Listen in as we talk about what encouraged them to work in clinical research, and why it continues to inspire them.

Nice to meet you all today. It’s wonderful that you're all here. And thank you for talking to us. So what I'd like to know is what's your first name and some information about your role in research. So if you'd like to go first, Diana?

**Diana:**

I'm Diana Austin, an internationally trained and educated healthcare professional, and I'm a research sister here, and it's an honour to share my journey and insights with you on this International Women's Day.

It's a new challenge every day. So if you're working in research, you should be willing to learn because we have new studies coming in and new treatments, new medications, everything is new for everyone.

**Rosemary:**

My name is Rosemary. I'm also a clinical research nurse. So my role involves delivering the care, like performing venopuncture, cannulation, ECG and then giving nursing care to the participants.

**Cyra:**

So my name is Cyra. I'm one of the clinical research trial nurses here in CCRC level five. My role is assisting patients in their journey when they consent for clinical trials. My role is not as complicated as Diana’s because I am the newbie here, so I am just involved now currently in facilitating [participant visits] when they come in, and their treatment specific to the visit and what needs to be done.

I'm learning a lot at the moment and I find it very, very interesting and enriching, skills-wise as well. And so everything, protocols, flow sheets, research-related documents, are quite new to me, but I'm enjoying it.

**Georgina:**

Wow, documents, I love the sound of documents!

**Sarah:**

Yes they sound scary, but it's fun!

**Georgina:**

Wonderful. So is it okay just to ask you, how did you get involved in research, Diana?

**Diana:**

It began with a passion for improving patient outcomes. And early in my nursing career, I realised that research was the key to advancing medical knowledge and transforming health care practices, and [I had] a desire to be a part of something bigger and something that would impact lives on a broader scale. And that led me down the path of research nursing.

Initially, I was not aware of much about research, but it was mainly during the COVID time when I saw from the research team that they were coming and participating, administering medication, and then all the research trials going on. And that's the time when I came to know more about research and then I decided to move.

So after coming here, I got involved with the vaccine trials so there is a lot of vaccines going on and it's a very good opportunity, we all are involved in it. And I learned a lot of skills as well, which are entirely different. I got the opportunity to learn lumbar puncture, so I'm [registered] and can perform nurse-led lumbar puncture.

Likewise, we have a lot of skills that we can learn during our pathway and our process of research. And I'm enjoying and it's a new challenge. It's a new challenge every day.

**Georgina:**

So it sounds like a massive team effort. Lots of variety within your role. But it's wonderful to hear. Rosemary, how about you?

**Rosemary:**

The team here is very amazing and there's so much teamwork and it's easy to get along with everyone.

There's so much support with all the new things you have to learn and with all the new skills that you have to acquire for you to be able to carry out your roles as a research nurse. So my main role is about delivering the care after the study team has recruited the participants and then they bring them here.

So I mainly do the hands-on, like doing the cannulation, the venopuncture, doing different types of ECGs with different types of machines. And I've had the opportunity to gain endoscopy skills and I've also learned new ways of using different kinds of software and answering data queries. And I find it very challenging sometimes because you really have to like study every time.

But I think it's also good because in the end, I may become like a knowledge repository for a lot of areas, since I work in the clinical trials unit. So we work with different teams, multidisciplinary teams, not only like one department but in different areas in health care. And I believe that what we are doing now, it's going to help us in our treatment care in the end, because today's research is tomorrow's care for most of our patients.

So for me it's a really good thing and I find it very exciting and I'm glad to be in clinical research.

**Georgina:**

Great, great path! Rosemary, how did you get involved in research?

**Rosemary:**

I've always had a passion for research, right from my final year in the university when I had to do research, I think my research was about stress management.

So I've had this kind of mindset. I really want to find out how all these medications we use come about. So in my nursing career, I've always wanted to move into nursing research. So when I was working on the ward, I met one nurse from one of the research teams. She came to see a patient, so I asked her about what she was doing.

So I told her, okay, then I'll keep an eye and then I would look at for opportunities that would come up. So I finally applied and then I had the role. So my focus is to help provide solutions to other illnesses that are going on. But then how best can I do that unless I get involved? So that has always been my passion and my focus.

So I'm very happy with what I'm doing now. And then knowing that participants come and then they tell you that, ‘Ooh, I've been feeling better than [when] I last came up’ after receiving the medication which was given to them. So I believe that gradually I'm working in my career path and then I'm fulfilling my dreams as well. And then it's very fulfilling for me.

**Georgina:**

Brilliant, brilliant. So it all started with a conversation with a colleague. And that it led you into sort of grabbing you into research. Wonderful. Cyra?

**Cyra:**

So [as a student] I got into this wound course and we had this assignment and that pushed me to do an in-depth review in like nursing journals and literature about wound care and wound management.

And so our lecturer encouraged us to find studies to prove if this is the best dressing for this wound and things like that. And I realised, ooh, it's really interesting. Data has proven [it] and they've actually done studies about this thing. And I [thought], well, maybe I can get involved in that.

**Georgina:**

Wonderful. So literature drew you in and got you involved. Wonderful. Diana what do you like about working in research?

**Diana:**

[What do I] like about working in research? Research is a dynamic and multi-faced experience. And it involves not only patient care, but also delving into the intricacies of clinical trials and scientific exploration. So in here every day is bringing a new challenge, every day we are doing different studies and so that is really challenging.

And then we learn a lot and we get more confidence. And there's a lot of teamwork as well, starting from the doctors and then study teams, they all are very supportive. And then we get all the training needed here. So, we get the time to learn and have the proper training and competence.

The teamwork is really great. So I do enjoy working here. And then research has been my passion.

**Georgina:**

So great support, challenges, and teamwork. That's wonderful. Rosemary, what do you like about working in research?

**Rosemary:**

For me, I like everything about working here, I think it's very fulfilling [working] on a site [with] the study team and the doctors and all of that, you get to learn a lot of things, you get to meet with other people, and going to research conferences, you meet people, you’re able to collaborate. And then you get to know more about sponsors and pharmaceutical companies, and what they are really into, and attending all these set-up meetings and site meetings, they really help you to have more knowledge about what you are doing.

So you actually know that, okay, this is how this is supposed to be done, and then you become very confident in the things you are doing. I like the people here. The team is very amazing. And the support is like 1,000% in everything that you are doing. There's so much support, so much encouragement from everyone.

And then it's not like if you don't know how to do something, someone is going to tell you off. No, it's not like that's here. So you are really able to learn very well. And learn very quickly as well. And then you get opportunities to do things that you cannot do.

**Georgina:**

So a big mix of all the opportunities, seeing the outcomes…

**Rosemary:**

And the other processes that everything goes through, with all the sample processing skills and everything. Yeah, I think it's very good.

**Georgina:**

Cyra, what do you love about research?

**Cyra:**

I love everything about it! [Laughter]

I love research! Everyone come and join us! [Laughter] But I think it's the deeper understanding for me of why we do what we do. Reading all and knowing that there are studies more advanced for cancer and kidney, you know, renal function and transplant and oncology, all these different studies that help improve our health care make me want to get more involved.

And I can be involved in that, I can be part of that. So that's mainly what I love about research and there's a lot of opportunities to learn, there's a lot of opportunities to be involved and there's a big network which I didn't know existed.

**Georgina:**

You make it sound brilliant, everyone's going to be wanting to be involved. [Laughter]

So today's conversation is about inspiring young people, young women, I should say, and getting involved in research and finding different pathways like you have.

What would you say to inspire someone, Diana?

**Diana:**

First and foremost, we need to showcase the impact women have in this field, [and] by highlighting diverse role models and their contributions we can break down the stereotypes and encourage women, young women, to pursue careers in research, as there are more than 80% [of people] working in health care professions are women.

**Georgina:**

80%? That's quite a big figure of women to inspire, isn’t it? Wonderful. So Rosemary, what would you say to inspire some young women to take part in and to be involved in research?

**Rosemary:**

I think just the same as Diana said, 80%. So 89% of the staff in NHS are women with 11% being males. And then out of that 89%, only one third of the women are involved in research, both clinicians and then nurses as well.

I think that for whatever role that each of us would want to pursue, we should be encouraged to do it. But if you do not know how to do it, that also becomes another factor. So making [research] known out there, through more publications, journals giving out leaflets and visiting the students in their schools, in colleges, in the universities, letting them know that there are a wide range of nursing specialties that you could find yourself in.

And one of the areas is clinical research. Even in the [Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation] Trust, there are some people who do not know much about clinical research.

I believe that the future of our health care is research. So it is very, very important that we get lots of people involved, especially women…

**Georgina:**

So driving awareness, and inspiring others, as all three of you have been talking [about] today. Cyra what would you say to inspire some young women to follow your path into research?

**Cyra:**

So for all the women out there, if you want to be involved in innovation and progress in health care development and treatment, I encourage you to be involved in any research and join our team! [Laughter]

But really, in any way that they can, you know… it's life changing for me I didn't imagine that my nursing career would be this and actually there's an opportunity, a huge opportunity to grow in this field and challenge yourself every day and enjoy work in research. Yeah, there's a future in research, definitely.

**Georgina:**

Wonderful. So I thank you for talking to us today and hopefully there'll be a lot of young women out there who are going to hear about opportunities that they weren't aware of, and they too, as Cyra says, can get involved.

Take that first step. Find out more. Read literature…

**Cyra:**

Yeah, call us! [Laughter]

**Georgina:**

And as Diana and Rosemary said, join the team!

**Diana:**

Just join us! Happy International Women's Day.

**Georgina:**

Aah, that’s lovely! Happy International Women's Day, everyone.