**Biography**

I am a registered adult nurse; I gained my registration in 2016. Graduating from the University of the West of England with a first-class honours (BSc) degree in adult nursing. I have specialised in cardiology and respiratory medicine but have more recently progressed into a leadership role. My current position is ‘ward leader’ on an acute cardiology and respiratory unit that provides level two respiratory care. I thrive off being a leader and take pride in my compassionate approach to it, but it has taken time, reflection and study to reach a point where I can walk out of the office and leave it behind – in my opinion one of the most difficult things as a leader.

**Abstract**

**Developing your role as a Ward Manager: A Lived Experience.**

When I look back to when I started as a ward manager and look at myself now, what would I have told myself? I have learnt a few things along the way that I will share with you below.

* Stick to your morals and always be kind
* You are accountable but you are not to blame
* People, people, people
* Prioritise and execute

As we go through my presentation, I will explain these points in greater detail, but I think you can begin to understand what is important to me as a leader.

When we talk about what tips and advice, I would give to someone who is an aspiring ward manager the first thing that comes to mind is communication – what, how and when you communicate to others is so important as a leader. Reflection is next – and this can be reflection in whichever form you want it to be, what’s important is that you just do it. It’s not easy being the decision maker, the pillar and sometimes the disciplinarian – your actions will weigh heavy at times. For those of you who may be thinking of applying for your first ward managers post try to understand what good clinical governance looks like, practice it in your current role; find an area where improvement could be made, develop a strategy, refine your strategy, disseminate the learning and close the loop. If you can succeed at this, it will show your seniors that you can lead and is a great example to use in interviews.

We have already touched the subject of leading by example in terms of sticking to your morals and always being kind. Unfortunately, leading by example isn’t always smiles and getting the job done. An important skill you will need to learn is vulnerability and the power this holds with you and your team during difficult times.

I describe the role of a ward manager like a rollercoaster, although this is not original; it is true, and it is one of the most challenging aspects of being a ward manager. This is where I talk about ‘balance’, the skill of being calm and calculated in response to the ever-changing environment around you. With changing environments in mind, let’s talk about Covid and the challenges of leading through this pandemic. Some of the main feelings were despair and fear when my ward was turned into a ‘covid ward’. How do you lead yourself through that, never-mind a team? The word is bravery – be brave in your actions and your conversations with your team, patients and relatives. The final objective for me was making sure my team could recover from the stress of that environment; we did this through reflection. Even though this was the hardest period of my professional career it has built a special bond between the team. After all, strong teams are made through tough times.

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