

# Donna Brennan

## Senior Clinical Pharmacy Technician for Cancer Services



### **What makes you excited to work for WHSCT and complete your tasks within your work environment?**

Working for the WHSCT has many great attributes but the main one for me is seeing the enthusiasm in the people I work with. My patients, particularly on the cancer ward, make it so much more worthwhile knowing we are making their stay in hospital a bit more comfortable and easier, especially through the pandemic. Seeing people who are willing to work hard is something I feed off, it is really energising to be around. I am always learning new things and every day brings something new on the ward. Some days it is not an easy experience, the responsibility of delivering the best care for every patient can sometimes be demanding. Working as a pharmacy technician on the oncology/haematology ward has been very rewarding and I feel I've finally found my purpose – my ideal role is definitely being a WHSCT Cancer clinical technician.

### **What inspires you to be successful in your role every day?**

I would love to be an inspiration for people around me in work. I want to try my best in my job each day, be attentive to the needs of my colleagues, patients and also enjoy my time in work, bringing some positive energy to the ward. I am constantly working on my skills and knowledge, learning new things about drugs/cancer - Oncology and Haematology diseases etc. The patients I see and talk to everyday is what really inspires me most and because of this I definitely push myself out of my comfort zone more to ensure that their stay and their discharge home is the most successful role I play as a cancer clinical pharmacy technician.

### **What career advice would you give?**

Always have a positive attitude to achieve success in your life. An attitude that helps you see the good in people. Try doing new things that helps you see and recognise opportunities that might arise in the near future. Having a mindset that uses words like, "I can", and "it is possible" will help you achieve more accomplishments. Enjoy life and don't take it too seriously. Always remember to try and have the perfect work and personal life balance.

## Tell us about your qualifications?

I started off working in a community pharmacy. My role was varied and involved assisting in the labelling and dispensing of prescribed medications. I also assisted in the counselling on the safe use of medication to customers especially over the counter medication. I moved to Dublin and was successful to get a job in Fannin Healthcare Ltd. It was working there that I got most of my training and experience that has helped me adjust to my role now in the hospital much quicker and with far more confidence. I was trained up in Ostomy/ Incontinence/ Masectomy/ Surgical/ Sundries/ Dressings/ Appliances/ Medications and much more. I worked for 4 years there, and then on the last year of being in Dublin I started working in Lakers Pharmaceutical Ltd which is a Stoma Care Advisory Service. This service provided an accessible, effective, evidenced-based specialist stoma care service to meet the needs of all patients with a stoma/stoma-related surgery. I received specialist training in all stoma care.

This allowed me to develop my knowledge and skills over the years and use them today when necessary on the ward. I applied for the post as a pharmacy support worker after moving back from Dublin. Within six months of this post I was then successful in applying for and securing a student Pharmacy technician position where I completed a BTEC in Pharmacy Services whilst also learning at work. After completing my BTEC which takes 2 years I then was able to apply for the role as a clinical pharmacy technician.

Since being a qualified clinical pharmacy technician I have progressed over the years to the role which I hold now and have completed accreditations, which are specific to my role, along the way through Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning & Development.

## What does your job entail?

I am currently a clinical pharmacy technician for the Oncology/Haematology ward in WHSCT. I work as part of the inpatient clinical pharmacy team as well as working on the ward as part of a multi- disciplinary team. My job entails speaking with patients to determine what medications they were taking before being admitted to hospital. I assist in managing patients medicines by assessing patient's own medicines, managing the supply of non-stock medicines, managing the supply of 'one stop' dispensing. I also complete a Drug History medicines reconciliation on every new patient as well as assisting with Discharge planning for when they are going home. I assist with prioritizing chemotherapy regimens for patients on the ward and flag up any chemotherapy supportive medications that are missing from the patient's kardex. This provides an improved service of patient care while they are in hospital.

## **What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?**

Good communication, teamwork, decision making and organisation are vital in my role as a pharmacy technician. Having great communication skills and empathy are needed to help me gather medication information and also to provide information to patients when advised. Having confidence helps me to have the right personal skills and experience which is essential.

A great attribute is being able to bring positivity as this sends the right message out and allows everyone as a team to work collectively together. Being proactive allows me to lead by example but also know when it is ok to be told what to do. No matter what the job is, roadblocks will always come up so it's good to think outside the box and be able to deal with problems swiftly and successfully. For me each day is a learning day and this helps my progression as a pharmacy technician.

## **Tell us an interesting fact about yourself**

At school I was good at Art. I did well in both GCSE and A-Level Art and this led me to completing a BTEC in Art design and media studies. From this I then wanted to go to college to begin a degree in graphic art and design to follow my passion which was to be a children's book illustrator. Unfortunately Graphic art & design was not what I anticipated so I decided I would take a year out and think about what I really wanted to do. It was during this time that my career path was laid out for me as within a couple months I applied for a job in community pharmacy and since then I've never looked back!

