Jade, Dietitian in Primary Care

My name is Jade and I work at East Cliff Medical Practice in Ramsgate, splitting my working hours between 2 roles, that of Physician Associate and that of Dietitian.

What is your career journey?

Upon graduation, I first worked at University College London as a Dietitian and studied for a MSc Physician Associate. Whilst doing this, I was offered a position in Primary Care, which was a sector I had not previously worked in.

What does your role entail?

Patients who come to my Dietetics clinic may have IBS, IBD, suffer from malnutrition, eating disorders, food allergies or intolerance; they may be diabetic or pre-diabetic, have cardio-vascular problems or need help with eating advice, weight management, etc. They are referred to me by the GP to provide them with more in-depth, consistent dietary advice and support.
Patients are of all ages, but additional risks factors are the deprived area, or being from a south-Asian background.

How would you explain the reasons for dietary issues?

There are many reasons why people struggle with their diets: busy lifestyles, unsocial hours, and the increasing cost of living – both in food prices and in the cost of cooking that food – have a negative impact on what people eat.
I have also noticed that the younger generation, people in their twenties, don't really know how to cook, and this is not helped by the rise in the use of apps that enable people to get their food delivered at any time, even though this option is not the most cost-effective one.
There is a wealth of dietetics information out there, including on social media, but not always consistent, it lacks clarity and causes confusion.

How does your role benefit the patients and the practice?

Patients do not need to be referred to Secondary Care for dietary advice, with long waiting lists and selective criteria. I support the GPs in providing advice, and this helps the practice to support the community and meet the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) targets.

What are your career plans in the future?

Going forward, I intend to become an Advanced Clinical Practice Diabetes Specialist Dietitian. In order to achieve this, I have enrolled onto the MSc Diabetics Clinical Care and Management programme at Kings College London. The overall aim of the clinical care and management in diabetes programme is to equip health professionals, with advanced applied skills in formulating diabetes care to improve patient outcomes. I am also studying for a qualification in non-medical prescribing, and another in leadership; I hope that these additional qualifications will enable me to upskill the nursing workforce and improve care outcomes for our local patients living with diabetes.

How do you like living and working in Kent & Medway?

I was born and bred in the county, and after university and work placements in London, I was happy to be offered a position in Thanet. It is pleasant to live by the sea, and Kent has lots to offer. But Thanet is a deprived area, with groups of people that need and deserve care. If you can offer that care to them, then you should do so.