

Allied Health Professionals



Cambridge
University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

If you are looking for a career that combines a challenge, and the reward of doing something really worthwhile, working as an Allied Healthcare Professional offers you a wide range of opportunities. Whether you are interested in science, the arts, sport or psychology, you're sure to find something that suits you.



Allied health professionals (AHPs) provide treatment and help rehabilitate adults and children who are ill, have disabilities or special needs, to live life as fully as possible.

They work across a wide range of care pathways, including A&E, paediatrics and end-of-life care, and in different settings including the community, people's homes and schools, as well as hospitals.

They frequently work alongside doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, making assessments and decisions about treatment.

As an AHP, it is important that you can work well as part of a team and be able to make your own decisions based on the training and specialist expertise you have acquired.

In the frontline of healthcare, all the allied health professions involve working directly with patients, usually one-to-one, but sometimes with groups of people who share similar health problems or issues.

This booklet aims to provide you with a brief overview of the roles within the AHP sector.

- **Art Therapists**

Art therapists use art as a form of psychotherapy to encourage clients to explore a variety of issues including emotional, behavioural or mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities, life-limiting conditions, neurological conditions or physical illnesses.



People of all ages from children to the elderly, regardless of artistic experience, use art therapy in this way as an aid to supporting them with their particular concern. It is not a diagnostic tool but rather a mode of communication and expression.

- **Drama Therapists**

Drama therapists are both clinicians and artists that draw on their knowledge of both theatre/drama and therapy to use performance arts as a medium for psychological therapy. Patients are able to explore a wide variety of different issues and needs from autism and dementia to physical/sexual abuse and mental illness in an indirect way leading to psychological, emotional and social changes.

Drama therapists tend to work within schools, mental health care, general health social care, prisons and in the voluntary sector.

- **Music Therapists**

Music therapists engage patients in live musical interaction so as to promote an individual's emotional wellbeing and improve their communication skills. Music Therapists can help patients develop and facilitate their communication skills, improve self-confidence and independence, enhance self-awareness and awareness of others, and improve concentration and attention skills.



In particular, music therapy is an effective intervention for those who cannot speak due to disability, illness or injury as their psychological, emotional, cognitive, physical, communicative and social needs can be addressed through the musical interaction with their therapist.

Music therapy can be beneficial for individuals of all ages and physical abilities however, from new born babies in terms of establishing the parent-child bond to those receiving palliative, end-of-life care.

- **Chiropodists/Podiatrists**

Podiatrists provide essential assessment, evaluation and foot care for a wide range of patients with a variety of conditions both long term and acute. Many of these fall into high risk categories such as patients with diabetes, cerebral palsy, peripheral arterial disease and peripheral nerve damage where podiatric care is of vital importance.



Many podiatrists have become further specialised into either the area of biomechanics or surgery. Biomechanics is often associated with treating sports related injuries but spans across a wide range of conditions including children and the elderly.

- **Osteopaths**

Osteopaths take a holistic view of the structure and function of the body to diagnose and treat a wide variety of medical conditions. Their work is centered on the principle that the skeleton, muscles, ligaments and connective tissues of an individual need to function smoothly together so as to maintain wellbeing.

Osteopaths use a number of non-invasive treatments such as touch, physical manipulation, stretching and massage to restore bodily equilibrium through increasing the mobility of joints, relieving muscle tension, enhancing blood and nerve supply to tissues, and encouraging an individual's own healing mechanisms.

- **Occupational Therapists**

Occupational Therapists work with people of all ages with a wide range of problems resulting from physical, mental, social or developmental difficulties.

You will see a huge variety of patients and help them with many different issues as an occupational therapist. Some examples of things you might work on include:



- Helping someone adapt to life after major surgery
- Helping people suffering from mental illness get back into everyday activities such as work or volunteering
- Helping elderly people stay in their own homes by providing adaptations such as level access showers or stair lifts

Occupational Therapists support people with a range of interventions to enable them to return to or optimise participation in all the things that people do; for example, caring for themselves and others, working, learning, playing and interacting with others. Being deprived of or having limited access to any or all of these occupations can affect physical and psychological health.

- **Operating Department Practitioners**

Operating Department Practitioners (ODPs) are highly skilled healthcare practitioners that support patients of all ages during each phase of the patient's perioperative care:



- **Anaesthetic** – provide patient-centred care and prepare specialist equipment and drugs
- **Surgical** – prepare all the necessary equipment and instruments for operations and providing these to the surgical team during the operation
- **Recovery** – supporting the patient throughout their time in the recovery ward, assessing vitals and fitness for return to the ward

As well as providing this specialised care, ODPs are responsible for preparing the operating theatre and maintaining communication between the surgical team, operating theatre and wider hospital.

- **Orthoptists**

Orthoptic clinical practice encompasses both diagnosis and treatment and is wide ranging. Orthoptists help premature infants with retinopathy of prematurity, children with

reduced vision due to squint, adults and children with eye movement defects due to diabetes, hypertension, endocrine dysfunction, cancer, trauma and stroke.



Extended scope orthoptic practitioners now work in high volume ophthalmic specialities such as glaucoma, cataract and age related macular degeneration.

Orthoptists work in acute hospital and community settings in health and education often as part of a multi-disciplinary medical, nursing and AHP team.

- **Paramedics**

Paramedics are the senior ambulance service healthcare professionals at an accident or a medical emergency. Often working by themselves, paramedics are responsible for assessing the patient's condition and then giving essential treatment. They use high-tech equipment such as defibrillators, spinal and traction splints and intravenous drips, as well as administering oxygen and drugs.

- **Prosthetists and Orthotists**

Prosthetists are autonomous registered practitioners who provide gait analysis and engineering solutions to patients with limb loss. They are extensively trained at undergraduate level in mechanics, bio-mechanics, and material science along with anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology. Their qualifications make them competent to design and provide prostheses that replicate the structural or functional characteristics of the patients absent limb.

They treat patients with congenital loss as well as loss due to diabetes, reduced vascularity, infection and trauma. Whilst they are autonomous practitioners they usually work closely with physiotherapists and occupational therapists as part of multidisciplinary amputee rehabilitation teams.

Orthotists are autonomous registered practitioners who provide gait analysis and engineering solutions to patients with problems of the neuro, muscular and skeletal systems. They are extensively trained at undergraduate level in mechanics, bio-mechanics, and material science along with anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology. Their qualifications make them competent to design and provide orthoses that modify the structural or functional characteristics of the patients' neuro-muscular and skeletal systems enabling patients to mobilise, eliminate gait deviations, reduce falls, reduce pain, prevent and facilitate the healing of ulcers.



They treat patients with a wide range of conditions including diabetes, arthritis, cerebral palsy, stroke, spina bifida, scoliosis, musculoskeletal, physiotherapy, sports injuries and trauma. Whilst they often work as autonomous practitioners they increasingly often form part of multidisciplinary teams such as within the diabetic foot team or neuro-rehabilitation team.

- **Dietitians**

Dietitians advise people and help them to make informed and practical choices about their food and nutrition. You will assess, diagnose and treat dietary and nutritional problems. You will also teach and inform the public and health professionals about diet and nutrition. The aim of a Dietician is to promote good health and prevent disease in individuals and communities



Uniquely, Dietitians use the most up-to-date public health and scientific research on food, health and disease, which they translate into practical guidance to enable people to make appropriate lifestyle and food choices.

- **Physiotherapists**

Physiotherapists work with people to help with a range of problems which affect movement using exercise, massage and other techniques. Physiotherapists help and treat people with physical problems caused by illness, injury, disability or ageing. Physiotherapists see human movement as central to the health and wellbeing of individuals so they aim to identify and maximise movement, as well as treating people they promote good health and advise people on how to avoid injury.

Physiotherapists address problems of impairment, activity and participation and manage recovering, stable and deteriorating conditions – particularly those associated with the neuro-muscular, musculo-skeletal, cardio-vascular and respiratory systems – through advice, treatment, rehabilitation, health promotion and supporting behavioural change.

Physiotherapy uses manual therapy, therapeutic exercise, the application of electro-physical modalities and other physical approaches in response to individual need.



- **Speech and Language Therapists**

Speech and Language Therapists provide life-changing treatment, support and care for children and adults who have difficulties with communication, or with eating, drinking and swallowing.

Speech and Language Therapists help people who, for physical or psychological reasons, have problems speaking and communicating. Patients range from children whose speech is slow to develop, to older people whose ability to speak has been impaired by illness or injury. It also includes treatment for those who have difficulty with eating or swallowing.

- **Radiographers**

- Therapeutic Radiographers**

Therapeutic radiographers play a vital role in the treatment of cancer. They are also responsible as they are the only health professionals qualified to plan and deliver radiotherapy. Radiotherapy is used either on its own or in combination with surgery and/or chemotherapy. Therapeutic Radiographers manage the patient pathway through the many radiotherapy processes, providing care and support for patients throughout their radiotherapy treatment.



- Diagnostic Radiographers**

Diagnostic Radiographers use a range of techniques to produce high quality images to diagnose an injury or disease. They are responsible for providing safe and accurate imaging examinations and increasingly also the resulting report. Diagnostic imaging is a component of the majority of care pathways. Radiographers are also key team members in Breast Screening and Ultrasound monitoring of pregnancy.

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