

Enhanced Practice

Case Study:

Luke Cunningham

Overview

Luke is a freelance dietitian who has worked as a specialist dietitian with an extended scope of practice within critical care. He has also held senior leadership positions, completed a secondment with NHS England South West Faculty of Advancing Practice and has lectured & tutored on the BDA's PENG clinical update course.

Developing from entry level into enhanced

Luke qualified as a dietitian in 2011. He began his career in an acute hospital setting, covering various specialisms before discovering his passion for gastroenterology, surgery, oncology, and critical care. In these roles, Luke extended his scope of practice through additional training and supervision to become the first dietitian in his trust to place nasogastric tubes (NGT). He has experience working as the joint-professional lead for dietetics and the joint-critical care dietetic lead within NHS Trusts.

Relocating from the North West to the South West, Luke adopted a portfolio career approach which allowed more opportunity to develop across the 4 pillars. One example is using his transferable skills to work in a non-dietetic role within eHealth. This role enabled him to leverage his innate understanding of technology alongside strong communication skills developed in dietetics, showcasing how dietitians can be leaders within digital health. This combination allowed him to assist healthcare colleagues in effectively utilising technology within their roles, ultimately enhancing care.

He co-led and delivered an innovative AHP leadership course and has developed his facilitated learning skills through contributing to the development and delivery of



the BDA specialist group "Introduction to Critical Care" module. Additionally, he has lectured and tutored on the PENG Clinical Update course.

Luke's interest in supporting professional development led him to undertake a part-time secondment, alongside his clinical role, with the South West Faculty of Advancing Practice. Working with multi-professional colleagues, he co-developed a workforce planning resource to help organisations plan and implement advanced practice roles in emerging areas. This work required extensive leadership skills to build relationships and influence change and has been presented at conferences nationally and internationally. Due to his combination of skills and knowledge within the NHS and critical care, Luke worked with NHS Elect and the Intensive Care Society project team as a clinical advisor, supporting the development of advanced practice statements for the new AHP critical care career framework.

To enhance his skills in translating research into practice, Luke completed a research module with the University of Plymouth, aligning with his goal to advance the AHP research strategy locally. He also obtained a Level 5 Institute of Leadership & Management qualification in coaching and mentoring to elevate effective leadership. After leaving these roles due to emigration, Luke began

working in a freelance capacity, supporting several projects that benefit the wider dietetic workforce.

Role Impact

Evidence shows that timely and appropriate nutritional interventions can greatly influence the survivorship and rehabilitation potential of critical care patients. With his enhanced knowledge of critical care alongside the extension of his role to include NGT placement, Luke was able to evidence how this resulted in more timely nutritional intervention. Having this extension to his role also positively benefits the wider multiprofessional team working.

Through his professional lead role, Luke empowered the workforce to recognise their contribution as a

leader at all levels of practice. He was recognised on the BDA's role of honours list for actions taken during the pandemic in contributing to the 'My Covid' service.

His work with the SW Faculty of Advancing Practice has helped provide structure and clarity at a local, regional and national level. The work has been presented at an international conference as an example of how AHPs in the UK are committed to developing and evolving the workforce.

Career Aspirations

Luke is taking some time to familiarise himself with working freelance. He aspires to explore his research and professional practice pillar more as well as returning to a more strategic focussed role.

How does Luke work across the 4 pillars of practice?

Luke embeds all the 4 pillars within his practice but feels he is strongest in 'leadership' and 'professional practice'. He has developed his facilitated learning pillar by lecturing and tutoring on the PENG clinical update course as well as supporting the development and delivery of the Introduction to Critical Care module. His completion of the MSc research module shows his commitment to developing his 'research and evidence' pillar.

