

Enhanced Practice

Case Study:

Joe Alvarez

Overview

Joe is a First Contact Practitioner (FCP) and Non-Medical Prescriber (NMP). Joe is chair of the BDA's First Contact Dietitians (FCD) Specialist Group. He has contributed to BDA guidelines and written a chapter for the Manual of Dietetic Practice.

Developing from entry level into enhanced

Joe began his career as a dietitian in 2017, starting with the community team in London. This role exposed him to various settings and a range of dietetic conditions, giving him a broad scope of practice to build on. This included providing dietary advice for conditions such as gastroenterology, diabetes, obesity, and mental health presentations as well as those requiring nutrition support. He visited people at home, in care homes and community clinics. Through additional training and supervision, he developed his specialist skills in gastroenterology, leading to the role of gastroenterology lead dietitian. In this capacity, he facilitated low FODMAP diet groups and provided dietary interventions for people with a range of gastroenterology conditions.

He was able to develop his leadership and education skills through training and supervising colleagues to manage these conditions. Additionally, he has provided mentorship and has been the lead for supporting dietetic learners in his team.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced opportunities, in challenging circumstances, that further broadened his scope of practice and expanded his skill set beyond a traditional dietitian role. Joe was redeployed to intensive care units and later participated



in flu vaccination efforts while continuing his home visits and clinic work.

In 2021, as part of the NHS England scheme to introduce a wider professional team within general practice, Joe secured a position in a Primary Care Network (PCN). Here he has used his clinical and leadership skills to establish a dietetic service. Initially he faced resistance from some established colleagues, however he has used data and positive service-user feedback to demonstrate the benefits that dietitians bring to pathways.

In 2022, Joe undertook additional learning at masters level, enrolling in a First Contact Practitioner module at the University of Hertfordshire to become one of England's first qualified First Contact Dietitians (FCDs). This training required supervision in practice and workplace-based assessment of competence by GPs and other members of the general practice team. This ensures Joe has the capability to safely manage complex gastroenterology and other presentations within a primary care setting.

His role as an FCP allows him to independently manage service-users; enabling him to assess, diagnose, treat, or refer for investigations without people needing to see a GP first. He has extended his scope to include additional tasks such as ordering and interpreting investigations



and supplementary prescribing. To become a prescriber, Joe undertook additional training through an accredited Non-Medical Prescribing module leading to HCPC annotation as a supplementary prescriber (SP).

Joe enhances his skills in research and evidence through commitment to conducting audit and collecting outcome data. This ensures he can evidence safe and effective practice and works to continuously improve this.

As Chair of the FCD Specialist Group, he demonstrates his leadership skills and is involved with important projects that develop the profession - such as updating the BDA IBS Guidelines and authoring the FCP chapter for the Manual of Dietetic Practice.

Role Impact

Joe is an advocate for enhancing access in primary care to ensure people can be seen by the right professional at the right time, which also helps to address health inequalities. His FCP skills, combined with his ability to prescribe, improves the service-user experience and allows GPs to focus on those who require their expertise.

Joe's role as an FCP from a dietetic background allows relevant interventions earlier in a service-users journey, allowing health concerns to be addressed before they escalate. This provides a better experience but also contributes to the overarching goal of sustainable, preventative healthcare. His dedication to proactive care ensures that service-users receive comprehensive assessments and tailored interventions, ultimately enhancing their long-term health outcomes.

Career Aspirations

Joe's career has been rich and rewarding to date, but he is keen to continue to progress and develop his knowledge and skills. He is committed to growing the role of FCP Dietitians to support people in his community as best he can. This will involve expanding his prescribing skills into different areas to support GPs/Pharmacists further. He is also actively engaged in the 'Prescribing Now' campaign which aims to secure independent prescribing status for the profession. Through his role as chair of the FCD specialist group, he is keen to continue to support this emerging role and to grow the number of FCDs in England and across the UK.

How does Joe work across the 4 pillars of practice?

Joe embeds the principles of all 4 pillars within his practice and feels he is strong in the 'professional practice' and 'leadership' pillars.

