

Dr Catherine Tart - Trailblazer Fellowship 2020/21

Starting off the fellowship was a daunting experience as it was the first time it had been done in Coventry and Warwickshire. However, we soon found our feet and were welcomed throughout the locality into a number of different areas relevant to our fellowship.

We have made endless connections with local health care leaders, local charities, community groups and policing initiatives to name a few. We have also networked across the country with other Trailblazer fellows partaking in monthly teaching, hearing about other experiences and projects being undertaken in their local areas. We were also given the chance to reflect and learn from each other about the challenges experienced from working in a deprived area.

Projects undertaken include:

- Smear uptake project – targeting non responders, educating women through discussion around why we do smears and what is involved, this has seen an increase in uptake which has also led to increased pick-up rates of abnormal smears.
- Chronic pain and opioid de-prescribing – spent time discussing chronic pain/the pain cycle with patients and their opioids prescriptions. Has led to a significant reduction in opioid volumes in the practice which is also beneficial to patient's health too.
- Z-drug and hypnotic reduction, sleep hygiene and referral to sleep services
- Learning disability annual health check uptake
- Assisted with organisation of the Midlands wide health inequalities conference – Medicine on the Margins
- Development of a local health inequalities related directory
- Joined in conversations regarding GP placements in Health inequalities
- Working with the local CCG/nursing transformation leads/local Learning Disability (LD) charity on a Learning Disability practice mark aware/kitemark to look to improve care provision by GP practices and standardise care across the city – project ongoing.

These projects have covered a wide number of patient groups and issues that are often experienced in deprived populations with the hope this will improve future health outcomes. It has been beneficial to me as a newly qualified GP to learn about all of the areas and understand how the health care system and GP training system works through these projects I have undertaken.

Having the time to spend focusing on these groups to educate and inform has led to improved uptake of health screening, reduction in prescriptions of opioids/z-drugs/hypnotics which are often associated with patient harm and addiction. Improved uptake and quality of annual health checks for patients with learning disability with our ongoing work to increase the level and standardise the care across Coventry with the practice mark award for LD. Involvement in the projects and local community groups has also led me to develop a better understanding of my locality and the problems they face. I am also much more aware of the resources that are available for my patients.

The funding from the fellowship has allowed me to attend courses in leadership and mental health. The mental health course in particular has proven to be beyond useful when dealing with a large proportion of my patient cohort.

Learning experiences and teaching from the Trailblazer programme include talks and teaching sessions from:

- Sir Michael Marmot – Health inequalities
- Dr Farzana Hussain – Project surgery Newham GP, GP of the year 2019
- Trauma informed care Dr Jonathan Tomlinson
- Medically unexplained symptoms
- Homeless Health
- The Red Cross
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
- Doctors of the World
- Decolonising contraception
- Chronic pain
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller cultural awareness training
- CGL – alcohol and drug addiction training
- Domestic violence/IRIS training
- Violence reduction unit - West Mercia Police

Meetings include:

- Vaccinating Coventry task groups
- Marmot meetings with providers from across Coventry
- Public health meetings
- Locality raising aspirations group – learning about what the police and a variety of other organisations are doing to improve/inspire younger generations in my locality

Summary:

Accepting the fellowship initially felt slightly risky as it was the first time it had been offered in Coventry and Warwickshire and it was still quite an unknown entity. However, I can honestly say that taking the risk and applying to the Trailblazer scheme was the best decision I have made.

I have been lucky to find a practice full of like-minded GPs who really want to make a difference. My professional development has been endless, and it has given me the chance to become a much more well-rounded, early years GP beyond the time constraints of the VTS training scheme. Whilst the global pandemic has limited some of the activities I would have liked to have undertaken, I also recognise I would not have been able to attend all the meetings, teaching sessions and network across the country without the ability of online learning.

I have developed skills and knowledge around the non-clinical side of GP, had lots of training and educational opportunities which I have been able to bring back into the practice and the patient population. Created networks and connections within the local community, CCG and leaders within the GP networks. It has also given me time to reflect on my learning, career progression and exploration of 'other' roles outside of clinical GP work.

As a newly qualified GP I would not have undertaken/applied for a GP role in this locality without this fellowship. I think and hope I bring value to our healthcare team which is beneficial to the practice and the patient population.