

# Amjad Salhab – Prescribing Clinical Pharmacist Transcript

## Introduction

My name is Amjad Salhab. I'm a prescribing clinical pharmacist. I am also an advanced clinical practitioner. My job as a prescriber and advanced practitioner is to deal with patients either via face to face or telephone triage. Take the history of their complaints, make a diagnosis, and then advise on the management as appropriate. So it could be prescribing at the surgery for the patient, or maybe it could be reassurance and general advice, but also, if needed, we can refer the patient to secondary care as an emergency. Sometimes we do refer patients back if we think further investigation on the long term, or non-urgent referral is needed.

I started working at this hub in the early days; we started in December 2019. The project was a trial to support local GP surgeries during winter pressures. It was a good opportunity to improve patients access to the service and relieve the pressure on other surgeries, and then COVID hit, and this hub was the COVID hub in Central Vale, so we were seeing patients with COVID. It was a difficult time for everyone and looking back at it made me proud to be part of that team.

## Challenges and Rewards

Challenges wise, obviously it was difficult for a lot of patients to understand, we heard, "I want to speak to my GP", "Why am I speaking to you?", "Who are you? You are not a doctor.", "You are not from my surgery." It was a challenge to change a culture amongst patients to say "we are here, we are qualified, we've done the necessary training, we've got support, we've got GP on site if needed and we are governed by lots of protocols and procedures". That was probably the biggest challenge.

Obviously the COVID period was a hugely challenging situation. Wearing PPE for long hours, which was a big thing and limited access to secondary care. We had to deal with patients who are really unwell and use a nebuliser on site. So there are lots of challenges but all in all, I think the Hub provided a very positive experience to us as healthcare professionals, local surgeries and even local residents of the Vale. We can see that as now I very rarely get questioned as to "Who are you? Why are you calling me?" And people are really happy and appreciate what we do nowadays, which is rewarding by itself.

The service was welcomed by local surgeries. Of course it was winter period, the pressure at peak anyway. So any extra appointment was welcomed by surgeries. There was an issue about prescribing pharmacists. There are lots of questions about the competency of myself and other allied healthcare professional colleagues but that was cleared quickly by the impact on practices and service users in general. I think it was a great opportunity for everyone. They were able to be seen or to speak to someone face to face. Especially with during COVID, when many surgeries closed their doors, so face to face appointments were not available easily, this hub provided the opportunity for patients to be seen face to face if deemed necessary, which gave an important opportunity to provide accurate diagnosis and management.

In terms of other colleagues the hub was a great place for a training site. Lots of community pharmacists, paramedics, nurses, and allied health care professionals worked there. They gained experience from seeing a wide range of conditions, and now provide services in different places. There was a trial of paramedics who now work as advanced practitioners working in their cars, to reduce the admission unnecessarily. Colleagues and community pharmacists booked on training in this site are now able to provide treatment in community pharmacy thanks to the experience they gained.



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## Conclusion

I think all in all it had a very positive impact on everyone. The hub provided a great opportunity for allied healthcare professionals to work closely in a multidisciplinary team with GP's. We need support sometimes from doctors and it was good to be in one building; to share cases, to discuss cases and the management options. I think that in itself improved and boosted clinical knowledge for allied healthcare professionals and doctors as well. It had a good impact socially and psychologically on allied healthcare professionals, I would say.

It's nice to have a close relationship with other healthcare professionals in this area. We had locum doctors, we had GP's, we had different allied health care professionals working here. Socially it was a very useful place to be. In addition to that, the impact of this hub for surgeries, to take the pressure at times when they had sickness with COVID or shortages of staff because of annual leave or other causes. It relieved the pressure on the teams in those surgeries in general.

We had days where we were protected for those struggling surgeries if needed. In terms of service users, I'm hoping that it was positive. They had a positive experience in the hub and reassuringly the surveys we're doing on a regular basis, all in all, provide very positive feedback, which is very good to know. It improves customer service or user access to healthcare service in the Vale and that was also important for the team.

## Lessons Learned

It's a bit difficult, we are in an evolving process, learning process all the time and it's useful to use this hub as a training hub for health care professionals in general and develop the skills of allied healthcare professional in this area. Which in the long term will reduce the pressure on surgeries. I hope.

