

I am due to start work at nine o'clock. I work in general practice as a nurse practitioner, but I am also undertaking a course in non-medical prescribing.

The morning is rushed as I try to get the kids up, dressed, breakfasted and to nursery on time. On the way, I think about yesterday's lectures, which had covered the assessment of a patient with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). I'm looking forward to getting to work because I want to put this learning into practice, but I have plenty more to do today, and I also want to get online at lunchtime to download some eBooks and start reading around the subjects for my assignments.

I have about 40 blood results to file and 30 tasks to complete. I work part-time and go to university one day a week—being in the practice for only 2 days a week means my workload is piling up. I file some bloods then notice my patients are arriving. I look at my clinic list and see that I have lots of diabetic patients coming to see me for reviews; I was hoping to get stuck into appointments with my minor illness patients.

My morning list is fairly straight forward. I increase a patient's insulin, start someone on metformin and give a lot of dietary advice. My last patient of the morning has a minor illness—good, I can practise my assessment skills and record this contact in my learning log as it may be a useful case study.

The patient doesn't have COPD and she isn't breathless; instead she has a flare-up of her eczema. It is extremely bad and during the consultation it comes to light that she hasn't been using her emollient cream on a regular basis. I sort her some creams and get something stronger for the flare-up, but most importantly, I print out a leaflet on eczema. Patient education is a large part of my role as a nurse practitioner in general practice.

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I have done little in the way of prescribing this morning, but the other work won't do itself. I file some more bloods, and at lunchtime I go online. I'm browsing eBooks when my phone rings. It's the nursery and one of my kids isn't feeling well. She has had an ear infection. I give them permission to administer some paracetamol, and I tell them to call me back if she is still feeling unwell.

By the time I've finished the call, I don't have time to look online as I need to get something to eat. I pop to the staff room and grab some lunch. Back at my desk, I start my admin—some referrals that I need to make and some phone calls for diabetic patients. I'm just getting some headway with the

admin when my colleague comes through. She is ear-syringing but she isn't sure about something. Could I come and have a look? I look at the man's ears; they are still full of wax and loose skin, making it tricky to syringe. I help to syringe the patient's ears, but by the time it's done, my admin time is over and I need to get my afternoon minor illness clinic underway. I may finally get to do some COPD assessment, and as a diabetes specialist nurse, respiratory is one of my weaknesses, so I really want to practise my skills in this area.

The beginning of my clinic is spent seeing a lot of patients with viral illnesses. I get a little frustrated when a patient who has had a sore throat for 2 days visits the clinic, so I deliver more patient education, this time through a leaflet on the differences between viral illness and bacterial infection.

The last patient of the day is a lady who wants to stop her treatment of simvastatin. We discuss her side-effects and agree to halt her medication for a month on a trial basis to see if it alleviates her symptoms.

When then the clinic finishes, I think about my day. At the start, I had a plan, and I think I have not achieved many of the things on it. At first I feel that I have not made any prescribing decisions, but on reflection I realise that I have made many: the initiation of diabetic medications, treatment for eczema—even stopping someone's medication is a prescribing decision.

I will write up today's events and maybe I will find that some of the decisions I have made will be suitable for my portfolio.

I wonder what tomorrow will bring?