

Maximising your clinical placement experience

Final-year student **Aghogho Wanogho** offers advice, for those starting out on their nursing journey, on making the most of the learning opportunities while on placement



As a final-year nursing student, I understand the significance of clinical placements in bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. They provide invaluable opportunities to develop clinical competence and professional attributes essential for successful nursing practice. Throughout these placements, I've encountered a diverse range of learning experiences, from mastering clinical skills such as wound care and medication administration, to navigating complex patient scenarios.

By embracing learning, seeking opportunities to learn and prioritising your wellbeing, you can make the most of these valuable learning opportunities and lay the foundation for a successful nursing career. Based on my own experience as a nursing student undertaking placements, I would like to share some practical tips on preparing for, and making the most of, clinical placements, which I hope those of you taking the same path will find useful.

Preparation

Preparation is crucial for ensuring a successful clinical placement experience. Before I start my placement, I make sure to take proactive steps to familiarise myself

with the placement site and its specialties. I conduct thorough research on common conditions, medications, and trust policies relevant to my practice area. Additionally, I establish clear learning objectives to guide my focus and ensure that I achieve productive learning outcomes.

Approach with openness

I acknowledge the importance of approaching each clinical experience with an open mind and a readiness to learn, regardless of whether the specialty matches my interests. I believe that every challenge brings a chance for growth and learning. Therefore, I actively seek out opportunities to learn from clinical instructors, and interdisciplinary team members, using their expertise to improve my clinical skills and expand my knowledge.

Seek clarification and feedback

I make it a point to ask questions whenever I encounter unfamiliar situations or procedures. If I feel unable to perform a task due to scope limitations or lack of competence, I assertively communicate my concerns. I recognise that my practice assessor and supervisors are there to support my learning journey and value my initiative in seeking clarification and understanding. In addition, I actively seek feedback during mid-placement and final interviews to identify areas for improvement and promote self-evaluation and reflective practice.

Take initiative

I believe in taking initiative and being proactive in volunteering for opportunities to observe or participate in patient care activities, procedures, and clinical simulations. I actively seek out additional learning resources and educational opportunities to enhance my clinical experience. For instance, I organise days to shadow other health professionals

and spend time in different departments to broaden my perspective and deepen my understanding of patient care.

Prioritise wellbeing

In the demands of clinical placements, I make it a priority to prioritise my mental and physical wellbeing. I integrate daily self-care rituals, such as practising mindfulness techniques and engaging in hobbies, to effectively manage stress and maintain balance. I seek support from peers and mentors, recognising the importance of seeking professional help if needed. I understand that my wellbeing is crucial for ensuring a fulfilling and sustainable clinical experience.

Each clinical experience presents an opportunity to broaden your knowledge, enhance your clinical skills, and develop your professional identity

To all nursing students beginning their clinical placement journey, I want to remind you that you are there to learn, grow, and positively impact lives. Each clinical experience presents an opportunity to broaden your knowledge, enhance your clinical skills, and develop your professional identity. Have confidence in your abilities and trust in your potential to thrive as a future health professional. Your unwavering dedication to patient-centred care and your commitment to lifelong learning are valuable contributions to the nursing profession. Stay focused, resilient, and compassionate as you embark on this transformative journey. **BJN**