



Clinical
Oncology

The Royal College of Radiologists

WHY I CHOSE A CAREER IN CLINICAL ONCOLOGY

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I am a consultant clinical oncologist in London. I work 4 days a week; 2 days in London and 2 days in Essex. My specialist interests are upper and lower gastrointestinal tumours and urological malignancies.

I thought I might be interested in oncology as soon as I finished medical school, and went on to do general medicine and get my MRCP. I was lucky to do 6 months in oncology whilst training and decided to apply for a training number. I trained in oncology in London and obtained my FRCR, then worked flexibly as a registrar while my eldest two children were young.

I got my consultant post in 2006, and then had my third child. It hasn't always been easy combining work and family, but I feel very lucky to have such a stimulating job – two days are never the same.

As a clinical oncologist, I see patients in clinic and discuss their diagnoses and treatment options with them. I use both chemotherapy and radiotherapy to treat cancer, and work closely with surgical colleagues, radiologists and pathologists, as well as specialist nurses, as part of a multidisciplinary team approach to make sure the best treatment is offered. I particularly enjoy radiotherapy planning, which has developed into a much more complex area, with technical advances happening at quite a pace. I am also involved in offering patients entry into national clinical trials, where these are available, and work closely with the research nurses on the team.

In oncology, we get to know our patients well, and I really enjoy the rapport that can develop between doctor and patient. It can be really gratifying when patients do well, and often patients and their families are very grateful for what can be offered. Even when the disease cannot be cured, we are often able to palliate symptoms and improve patients' quality of life. We may have to have difficult and complex discussions with patients and families about how the disease is progressing and what options may or may not be available, and what the benefits and side effects may be. This can be a challenge, but it is one I enjoy enormously, since I feel privileged to be able to offer help to patients at what can be a very difficult time for them.