

Healthcare Assistant Turned Radiographer: Sometimes Your Future Is Rooted in Painful Moments

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I worked for four years as a Healthcare Assistant across various NHS and private hospital settings. One thing I witnessed everywhere was the incredible impact of teamwork.

There were times when we were short-staffed and would panic, wondering how we were going to safely care for all our patients. We would rely on bank staff and agency colleagues to support us. Despite the challenges and complications, somehow, we always managed to get through.

Then, one day at work, I collapsed. I don't know exactly what caused it. All I remember is finding myself in the X-ray department. A department I

had rarely given much thought to before. That day, I had previously mentioned to my colleagues that I was experiencing unexplained pain in my feet. We quickly dismissed it as nothing more than the result of another long day at work.

After the X-ray, I was diagnosed with osteopoikilosis (OPK), a rare bone condition. Years earlier, I had heard my parents talk about this condition quite often, so I wondered whether I had inherited it from one of them. Something else unexpected happened that day. I became fascinated by everything happening in the X-ray department.

I watched the radiographers operating the different imaging equipment, communicating with patients and working as part of the wider healthcare team. Somehow, I became so absorbed in what they were doing that, for a moment, I forgot about the pain. Instead, I heard myself silently asking myself: **“What is stopping you?”**

The following week, I went back to the X-ray department and asked whether they used bank staff. Fast forward four years, and here I am, about to qualify as a radiographer. I am now in the final year of my undergraduate degree in Scotland. I am loving what I am doing although it can be challenging at times, juggling bank work alongside my studies. I have spent much of my training across different clinical placement areas, and I now have two potential hospitals where I could eventually work once I qualify.

I never dreamed of becoming a radiographer. Growing up, I had imagined myself pursuing careers such as becoming a registered general nurse or working in social care. In my little head, I sometimes imagined myself

joining the likes of Michael Schumacher or Lewis Hamilton, operating or racing cars! Surprisingly, I am now looking forward to operating X-ray machines and scanners instead.

I fell in love with radiography at a time when I felt completely lost. When I couldn't make sense of what I wanted professionally, an unexpected experience gave me a new direction while I lay on an X-ray department bed.

Approximately half of my training has been spent in different clinical placement areas. Those experiences have equipped me with the knowledge, confidence and practical skills to look forward to starting my career as a radiographer.

Over the past four years, I have learned so much — not only about radiography, but also about people, teamwork, resilience and patient care.

My journey has shown me that healthcare in the UK can be flexible and accommodating. With dedication, an open mind and the right opportunities, people can discover completely new paths within healthcare. So, my advice to healthcare professionals who are still unsure about what they want to do is simple: **Keep an open mind. Welcome opportunities, even when you find yourself in what feels like a hopeless situation.** Sometimes, your future can be rooted in your most painful moments.

And to all the healthcare professionals who continue to support students, trainees and those just starting their careers: **Thank you.** Please continue to support them/us. You may not realise it, but you are our backbone. We are watching, learning and drawing confidence from you.

One unexpected day in an X-ray department changed the direction of my life. Now, I'm excited to see where this new journey takes me.