



## Tips & tricks to help new starters feel safe & be safe this August

### Dr Natalie Silvey, trainee anaesthetist

August is a time of great flux within the NHS. New staff including new foundation year one doctors start, a huge number of doctors rotate to new teams and existing staff have new faces arriving. It can feel like a time of great uncertainty especially for brand new staff members. Below are a few of the tips that I have found most helpful in my career so far to make this time a bit easier.

- Start any conversation with “hello my name is” and explain who you are. Whether talking to fellow staff or to patients always introduce yourself and make your role clear.
- Listen to fellow staff and to patients. This may seem pretty self-explanatory but it is vital. If a nurse says to me “I am worried” that is a huge red flag. Patients will give you a wealth of information about themselves and their conditions – you just have to give them the time to tell you.
- Patients and relatives are the key to patient safety. Start by always listening to them, giving time to raise any issues or concerns and take them seriously. Act on any concerns raised and always escalate to your senior if you are worried.
- Always ask “do you have any questions?” after any discussion and then wait for at least 10 seconds. Patients and family members may have questions but actually give them the time to formulate them and ask.
- Writing in the notes can seem like a chore but it is vital. It is the record of what has happened to that patient so making your notes clear will be incredibly important when someone else comes to see your patient later.
- When talking to a colleague or senior for advice or for a review of a patient use a tool like [SBAR](#) to aid you and be clear about what you want. Have things like the latest set of patient observations to hand and the patient’s drug chart. If you just want advice say so but if you want the patient to be reviewed clearly state that and say how urgently. As one consultant said to me on my first day “if you want me there always say that straight away”.
- If you ever think “should I...” just do it, for example should I put in a bigger cannula/get help/do an arterial blood gas. If you are thinking it the likelihood is you are worried, listen to your gut instinct in these moments.

- Try to learn other staff member's names and don't be embarrassed to ask them when you forget. I have found this particularly important in emergency situations, ask someone to do something using their name so you are clear.
- Treat patients how you would want a member of your own family to be treated. With respect, dignity, kindness and always listen to them and take concerns seriously. This is my golden rule and I don't think you can go far wrong if you always do this.

For me patient safety runs through the heart of all of these little tips. This list is by no means comprehensive but it encompasses a few of the core things that I think are vital day to day. So to new staff – welcome and good luck, for those of continuing remember everyone had their first day once. For more tips have a look at #tipsfornewdocs on Twitter where you can find a wealth of great advice.

*Dr Natalie Silvey is a trainee anaesthetist who is very active on social media and tweets as @silv24 about patient safety, medical education and quite often baking.*

*Sign up to Safety is harnessing the commitment of NHS staff to make care safer. Find out more about the campaign and join the community at [www.signuptosafety.nhs.uk](http://www.signuptosafety.nhs.uk).*