

Clare Taylor

Ten minutes is not enough



CLARE TAYLOR, 36, is a GP in Birmingham, who divides her time between general practice and research into cardiovascular disease at the university. A self confessed swot at school, she read medicine at Cambridge and moved to Birmingham in 2007 to an academic general practice training post. A member of the Royal College of General Practitioners' (RCGP) council, she believes that general practice is enhanced by research and finds patients understanding and supportive of her academic endeavours. She has published papers on heart failure and co-written a book on the treatment of cardiovascular disease in primary care.

What single unheralded change has made the most difference in your field in your lifetime?

"The rise of the patient's voice in the NHS. I think it's vital that the health service listens and responds to patients, and I hope that this movement grows and strengthens"

What was your earliest ambition?

To go to Cambridge; we had relatives who lived near there, and I loved the place. I didn't care what subject I read.

What was the worst mistake in your career?

The biggest mistake would have been not to choose medicine, and I very nearly didn't. It was a last minute decision, and I have my dad to thank for helping me make the choice.

What was your best career move?

Moving to Birmingham in 2007 to take up an academic general practice training post. I love being a GP, researcher, and teacher, and I've also been privileged to be part of the RCGP's move to improve representation for trainees and new GPs, through the AiT and First5 committees. Also, I met my husband at a clinical academic trainee seminar after moving here.

To whom would you most like to apologise?

To all of the patients I've kept waiting beyond their appointment time, because 10 minutes is never enough for a thorough consultation.

Bevan or Lansley? Who has been the best and the worst health secretary in your lifetime?

Whoever is health secretary, the vision is often short term and politically driven, which can be harmful. Instead we need some stability in the NHS and a genuine understanding of what frontline workers, particularly GPs, actually do.

Summarise your personality in three words

Reflective. Organised. Thorough.

Where are or were you happiest?

At home in our village: having a family barbecue, walking in the countryside, looking out over the view from our house, having the niece and nephew around to play, going out for lunch at a local tea room, and enjoying a night out with the friends I've known since childhood.

What single unheralded change has made the most difference in your field in your lifetime?

The rise of the patient's voice in the NHS. I think it's vital that the health service listens and responds to patients, and I hope that this movement grows and strengthens.

Do you support doctor assisted suicide?

This is a difficult and complex issue. I believe that doctors should focus on providing excellent end of life care at the time and place that patients need it.

What book should every doctor read?

The House of God by Samuel Shem—an amusing book that highlights the awful traits of overburdened doctors and institutions, which should be a lesson on how not to think or behave, ever.

What poem, song, or passage of prose would you like mourners at your funeral to hear?

Make Your Own Kind of Music by Mama Cass Elliot.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

Sleeping. I love to lie in at the weekend, and it recharges my batteries for the week ahead.

What television programmes do you like?

Grand Designs: I love the stories of the self builders as much as the buildings themselves, and Kevin McCloud is an excellent presenter who, as far as I know, doesn't assault the crew.

What is your most treasured possession?

My photographs (both print and electronic) and my diaries.

What, if anything, are you doing to reduce your carbon footprint?

We recycle everything we can. And I'm trying, but often failing, to go "paperless" with my academic work.

What personal ambition do you still have?

I feel as though I'm really still at the start of my career. I'd like to see more and more medical research happen in primary care to inform practice, and I want to be part of making that happen.

Where does alcohol fit into your life?

I do like a nice glass of Sauvignon blanc.

What is your pet hate?

Arrogance; there is no excuse for it.

Do you have any regrets about becoming a doctor?

When I see or hear about patients receiving bad care, I despair. But equally, when I hear about the many examples of great care, I feel proud to be a part of the NHS. I've had to realise that providing the best care you can to the person in front of you counts for a great deal.

If you weren't in your present position what would you be doing instead?

I love being an academic GP, but if I had to pick, I'd like to be a primary school teacher or run a traditional sweet shop.

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