



CAREERS

Tricia Woodhead: connecting clinicians and reducing harm

The associate director for patient safety and former consultant radiologist speaks to **Adrian O'Dowd** about her varied career

Adrian O'Dowd

London, UK

Family first

Nobody in my family has ever been a doctor but I had a good friend at junior school whose mum was a GP. I was attracted by how she was using her knowledge to help people and it looked like an interesting career. From the age of 12, that's all I wanted to do.

Looking inside

During my degree I did an elective in a maternity hospital in Glasgow. They were developing ultrasound in the obstetric department and it was the first time I was introduced to it. I found it fascinating.

The appeal of radiology

During my training in Southampton, we had the opportunity to learn more about ultrasound. I liked the idea of seeing inside someone, easily and without using radiation, instead of having to guess what the matter with them was from the outside. My last senior house officer job was in neurology so I got to understand computed tomography scanning. That all came together and I thought that, rather than general medicine, I'd do radiology.

Moving into management

When I was a registrar in London in the 1980s we had a registrar representative who sat on the radiology board. During my turn in this role I became familiar with what went on behind closed doors and in managerial decision making. During my first eight years at Weston Area Health Trust there were opportunities to get involved in leadership work, which really interested me, and in 1998 I decided to do an MBA.

Patient safety champion

We were fortunate in the south west of England to have some very forward thinking senior leaders who started a collaboration with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI). In 2010, I was really lucky to get a Health Foundation fellowship to go to the IHI in the US. It was a phenomenal opportunity.

Reducing harm

As medical lead for the South West Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Collaborative one of our successes was being involved in the IHI Breakthrough Collaborative Model. It brought together 16 acute hospitals, community services, and mental health providers from across the south west with the aim of reducing mortality rates by 15% and cutting significant harm through work streams.

Achievements

Over the past decade we've moved away from hospitals and clinicians working independently of each other towards a more mature and effective network approach. People are now able to contact colleagues in different trusts or areas and we all help and support each other. I've had a small part in making that possible.

Down time

My out of work interests are in the natural world and in particular wildlife photography. I also make time for yoga and Pilates as well as developing my other passion, my garden.

Tips for the next generation

Work out what you are passionate about and stick with that. Know where you get your energy from and go there as often as you can. Finally, stay curious about what is happening and why. Use that to start conversations about how things could be better.

Curriculum vitae:

2014 to present Associate director for patient safety at West of England Academic Health Science Network

2013-2016 Patient safety adviser to the Royal College of Radiologists

2011-2014 Director of quality and patient safety, Weston Area Health Trust

2011-2014 Medical lead for the South West Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Collaborative

2010-2011 Health Foundation Quality Improvement Fellowship based at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement Boston, Massachusetts, USA

2001-2009 Executive medical director, Weston Area Health Trust

MBA, graduated with distinction, University of Bath

1991-2014 Consultant radiologist, Weston Area Health Trust

1989-1990 Consultant radiologist with a special interest in paediatrics, St Helier and Carshalton Hospitals, London

1982-1989 Registrar and senior registrar in radiology, University College Hospital, London

Bachelor of Medicine, University of Southampton