



CAREERS

Lucy Wright: seeing patients in their own environment

The occupational health physician tells **Adrian O'Dowd** how her specialty allows doctors a unique way of tapping into and improving people's health

Adrian O'Dowd

London, UK

Family business

Both my parents were doctors, my grandma was a nurse, and my grandpa was a pharmacist, so it never occurred to me not to be a doctor. After qualifying I was initially interested in surgery and enjoyed learning surgical techniques.

Making a difference

While working on a chest ward I saw serious cases everyday where there was nothing I could do except ensure the patient got a good lawyer and their industrial injury benefit. I wondered why nobody was doing anything about it so I spoke with the Health and Safety Executive's Employment Medical Advisory Service. I ended up training with them.

Private sector

I joined BP because I thought that instead of telling companies what they should do for their occupational health I ought to go and do it. During my 10 years there I became regional lead for Europe and ran the occupational health department in Chicago. I left because my family got fed up with me never being around.

Next steps

I got a job as a regional doctor for a company called Atos Origins in 2006, which became Atos Healthcare. I was there until we had a management buyout, creating Optima Health and I'm still with them.

Medicine outside of healthcare

Occupational health is fascinating work. Normally as a doctor, you see people in your environment—a clinic or hospital—and that's not where they're most comfortable. I see them at work

where they are demonstrating that they are a productive, important member of society.

Fulfilment

I never expected to end up as a company director. It's a fascinating role. I enjoy helping people back to work and helping managers understand how they can help. A lot of managers are willing but scared when people are unwell, particularly if someone has mental health problems or cancer.

Advice for the next generation

I would say to new doctors, work out what's important to you and be true to that. Don't sweat the small stuff and if you stick with what you believe is important, the stuff around reaching a senior position or getting a decent salary will happen.

Curriculum vitae:

2018 to present: Chief examiner Diploma of Occupational Medicine for Faculty of Occupational Medicine

2017 to present: Chief medical officer and board director for Optima Health

2006-2016: Occupational physician, director of clinical services, medical director, and then chief medical officer for Atos Healthcare

2002-2011: Member of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council

1995-2005: Various posts at BP in Europe, the UK, and USA

1989-1994: Senior employment medical adviser for Employment Medical Advisory Service at the Health and Safety Executive

1988-1989: Senior house officer in psychiatry at St Thomas' Hospital and South Western Hospital, London

1985-1987: Senior house officer in respiratory medicine, general medicine, endocrinology, and nephrology at South Cleveland Hospital, Middlesbrough

1985: House surgeon at Bishop Auckland General Hospital, Bishop Auckland, County Durham

1984: Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery from University of Northampton