



# CAREERS

## Role model: Emma Crosbie

The internationally recognised researcher tells **Jacqui Wise** why she is passionate about nurturing the next generation of clinical academics

### Jacqui Wise

Clinical academia is very difficult because you have to be simultaneously good at two different things, says Emma Crosbie, professor of gynaecological oncology at the University of Manchester.

“Alongside the clinical skills you have to have a different set of skills for academia—finding the important research questions, designing studies, and being able to write and present the findings,” she says. “Unless you have a very supportive environment in which to develop both skill sets, it is very difficult to do.”

In addition to her own clinical practice at Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust and her research, Crosbie also supervises trainees, and she wants to replicate the experience that she had as a trainee for them.

Henry Kitchener, now emeritus professor at the University of Manchester, was her PhD supervisor and has supported her throughout her career. “In those days there weren’t clinical training pathways, so you did your PhD and went straight back into full time clinical training,” she says. “He was fantastic in helping me maintain links with academia and supported me every step of the way.”

Most trainees have no previous experience of research when they start, so they need a lot of support to begin with. Crosbie has an open door approach and is always available to support them if they have any queries.

“Usually, after a year or so, they suddenly become in charge of their project,” Crosbie says. “It’s fantastic to see students spreading their wings and start flying. That’s really rewarding.”

Because Crosbie is so enthusiastic about what she does, it rubs off on her students. The team go out together to celebrate achievements, take part in charity events, and go hiking together, which helps to develop a team spirit.

Much of Crosbie’s own research is into finding new ways of preventing endometrial cancer in women at risk and finding new ways of detecting it that are non-invasive. She is also researching ways to improve the management of early stage low grade cancers to avoid hysterectomy for younger women. She has over 110 publications to her name and has written an award winning obstetrics and gynaecology textbook for medical students.

Spending half the week with patients gives Crosbie a clinical context for her research. “Without that perspective it is difficult to find the important clinical questions,” she says. “You can spend a lot of time carrying out research that may be of academic interest but won’t really benefit patients.”

Despite endometrial cancer being the fourth most common cancer in women it is a neglected area of research, says Crosbie. “I like to champion it and consider myself a #wombwarrior—my team is ‘Team Womb.’”

Crosbie is also passionate about involving patients in setting research priorities. She led the James Lind Alliance Priority Womb Cancer Priority Setting Partnership to identify the top 10 most important unanswered research questions about endometrial cancer. “There is limited time and limited resources for research. If we don’t concentrate our time on what is important then it is wasted effort,” she says.

Crosbie has three children aged 14, 11, and 9. “It is a challenge to balance work with family life, especially as my husband is also a clinical academic. We even have to diarise walking the dog,” she laughs.

### Nominated by Neil Ryan

Emma is adored by her patients and, despite being a busy clinical academic, dedicates herself wholly to them. She is an exemplar of communication and individualised care; each of her patients are to her a person seen within the web of their complexities, and they are at the heart of their care. Furthermore, she is passionate about patient involvement in research and clinical care. She is involved in national and local patient initiatives and focus groups.

What makes this even more extraordinary is that she has done this while raising three children, a dog, and two cats. Being a woman in a male dominated specialty has meant that she has had to work that bit harder to get to the impressive position she holds. I honestly cannot think of anyone in my life who is more inspirational.

Neil Ryan is a medical research council doctoral fellow and specialty registrar in obstetrics and gynaecology.

To nominate someone who has been a role model during your medical career, send their name, job title, and the reason for your nomination to [arimmer@bmj.com](mailto:arimmer@bmj.com)

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