

Getting started in Pre-Hospital Care – Personal Account

I moved to Yorkshire for a change of scenery and to start my Emergency Medicine specialist training knowing little about the area I was moving to or the people I would meet along the way.

I had joined Mountain Rescue in South Wales just after finishing Medical School for a new challenge and to combine my passions in life – the outdoors and medicine. During my F2 year I had been invited to a local motor racing circuit by my supervising consultant to see what the medics did and get involved where I was able. Then I move to Yorkshire...I transferred to the Mountain Rescue team local to the area I was living in without too many difficulties but how was I going to nurture this interest in pre-hospital care that I had discovered?

My educational supervisor put me in touch with several key people...the CMO of the nearest motor racing circuit and the chairman of a local charity providing pre-hospital care in conjunction with the local ambulance service and so my pre-hospital career began.

I started going to 3-4 meetings/year at the motor racing circuit, mainly sitting waiting for cars or bikes to crash but the West Yorkshire Medic Response Team (WYMRT) provided me with my greatest experiences initially. I started attending the monthly governance evenings, learning from experienced members of the team, discussing cases, protocols and equipment, then came the opportunity of observer shifts. I made myself as available as possible on Friday and Saturday evenings to train alongside experienced pre-hospital doctors and paramedics as part of this voluntary team. We went to many different types of incident and spent a lot of time waiting for something to happen (an important skill to master in the pre-hospital world). Each incident taught me something new about myself or the skills required.

After 3 years of Mountain Rescue, Motorsport and the WYMRT alongside my EM training I decided to take a year out of my formal EM training to undertake a Clinical Fellow Post. I combined 4 days/week in the Emergency Department with 1 day/week engaging in pre-hospital activities. My experiences through the year varied from days shadowing ambulance crews and in the Emergency Operations Centre to audit work and governance meetings with my supervisor, emergency response driver training and we also managed a few BASiCs jobs with me tagging along. Each activity taught me something new or a different approach to a situation.

Towards the end of this clinical fellow year I started to practice as a solo doctor for WYMRT - myself and a paramedic without the formal supervision standing behind me, although there is always a Consultant on call for phone advice...terrifying! With the support of the paramedics I adjusted to being the one people looked at for a decision and continue to be that doctor, now with trainees tagging along with me.

As I progressed my EM training at ST4 my application to become a BASiCs doctor for the ambulance service was approved. Now I am responding to incidents in my own car without the support of my familiar paramedic colleagues. The differences when you have to navigate, drive yourself there and then don't know who is who when you arrive adds new challenges to already difficult situations. I am getting to know my local area better and becoming a recognisable face to the local ambulance crews making each tasking a little more comfortable as faces and names become familiar.

My progression so far has been varied and interesting but I still have much to learn and experience. I have been given many opportunities and grabbed them with both hands. It has taken a great deal of time and organisation however pre-hospital care has so far provided me with an enjoyable and enlightening addition to my EM training.