

Celebrating the Women of MTW

Sara Mumford's story of mortuary to magazine cover – the influence of change

It wasn't a surprise that Sara wanted to become a Doctor as both her parents are Doctors though her Dad was a little unsure about her choice. To ensure she really knew what she was letting herself in for, he arranged for Sara to spend a week in the mortuary with his Pathologist colleague- and she loved it!

Despite that, Sara didn't want to work in Pathology so her first House Officer job was in Charing Cross Hospital inpatient eye unit. What wasn't to love? – she was running the emergency eye clinic and learning how to remove metal from eyes and turn eyelids inside out! To pursue a career in Ophthalmology she undertook the FRCS when she discovered, during the anatomy section of the course, that she wasn't interested in other parts of the body. However, she says she had some amazing infection control lectures and decided that she had to become a Microbiologist.



Sara was a Registrar and Senior Registrar at St George's and then moved out of London and had two children. She began working at the Public Health Laboratory in Ashford, working out of the William Harvey Hospital in a Senior Registrar and then Consultant role. She had another baby and wanted to take a year out but this was refused so she decided to resign. She thoroughly enjoyed spending three years out of work place with her children.

During her time out, Sara was contacted by the Health Protection Unit at Preston Hall Hospital who asked her to deliver a lecture at Canterbury Christchurch University which she agreed to do. She found out that the Department of Health funded a scheme for women who had been on a career break which brought them back into work in a supernumerary post – she applied and became a Consultant in Communicable Disease Control. Part of the role involved her investigating the C.Diff outbreak at MTW. One day she received a call from the Medical Director at MTW who asked her to consider the role of Director of Infection Prevention and Control. It took him two laps of the grounds at Preston Hospital with Sara for her to even consider it. She spoke about her reservations with a friend who asked her “Why should you NOT do it?” and eventually Sara decided this was the role for her.

September 2007 saw her first day in the role and a live appearance on the local news talking about the C.Diff outbreak and on her second day she was giving a live interview on GMTV at 7.30am in a howling gale! The job was a tough one, there was a lot of publicity about the outbreak and Sara found herself having to take on a very directive role. This paid off as by April 2008 MTW had the lowest rates in the South East and she even appeared on the cover of the HSJ with Glenn Douglas - “The Managers who Saved Maidstone”.

Sara is immensely proud of her children – with her eldest daughter designing the next bridal collection for Debenhams, her son a designer of F1 gearboxes and her youngest in 6th form studying engineering. She knows all too well the challenges of juggling children with a full time job - and her advice? “Do anything you want to, accept help, work hard, prioritise what's important and don't give up on that. If something makes you unhappy, stop doing it and be prepared to change the plan”.

In 2012 Sara became the Clinical Director for Pharmacy, Pathology and is now the Associate Medical Director for Clinical Operations. She is able to be more consultative and collaborative in her approach and is always looking to develop her staff and encourage people to grow.