



Prifysgol Abertawe  
Swansea University

# HEALTH VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME

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The College of Human and Health Sciences has an active health volunteers programme. Local people support our health professional programmes in a variety of important ways.

**Here are their stories...**





## John T

### **How did you become involved with the College's health programmes?**

I had worked in a number of areas before entering the world of housing - sheltered and older persons. This involved meeting service users and their families, and many health care professionals. Retirement seemed to be a waste of an experience that could be channelled elsewhere. The group gave me the opportunity to keep my finger on the pulse of work and be mentally stimulated but in a more relaxed mode. I soon came to realise that not only was my career experience useful, but more importantly my life experiences. I soon determined that we are all patients whether we have experience professionally or personally caring for others. We are all customers of the NHS or health services and have a contribution to make.

### **What have you gained from the experience?**

An increase of knowledge and a greater awareness of issues that had been of interest to me before my retirement. The experience has led to a deepening of interest particularly in research being done within the college. After extensive training and study a small group of us now gather together to review research projects and offer our own perspective on academic work. We have come from a variety of backgrounds and have life experiences that can help researchers take a fresh look at their projects. Our group, known as PEER (the Patient Experience & Evaluation in Research group), uses a magnifying glass as a symbol because it reminds us that we are there to look closely at each proposal.

### **What activities are you involved in?**

I've been involved with student selection across a number of areas in the college using group and traditional panel interviews. For me it is an extension of previous work experience but for the applicant our presence is a useful reminder that they're going to be dealing with real people. The group has involved us in open days to welcome potential students. We have also been involved in course content assessment and validation exercises with external organisations. I have also spoken to classes and explained what living with particular illnesses is all about.

### **Would you recommend it to others, and why?**

Oh definitely, because it challenges and stimulates the little grey cells!

### **Do you feel valued and supported?**

Over the last few years the support of the academic and administrative staff at the college have ensured that we have always had the help and support needed to fulfil our role. In addition meeting together regularly has strengthened each of us and as a team. I can say that without question.



## Lynda

### **How did you become involved with the College's health programmes?**

I have been attending group meetings at Swansea University for over four years. My mother suffered from chronic arthritis and I was extremely grateful for the nursing care that she had received. The year she died my eldest had just graduated from Swansea University and when the invitation to join the group presented itself I felt that this was a golden opportunity to give something back and to utilise the commodity that I had most of - my time.

### **What have you gained from the experience?**

I have definitely benefitted from my association with the University. My confidence in group situations has improved and I am not nervous any more about expressing my opinions.

### **What activities are you involved in?**

I have enjoyed discussions with the student nurses and have assisted at student nursing interviews. This was challenging but extremely rewarding.

I have even appeared in a short video concerning the loss of a loved one which I hope will help educate students during their training at the University.

### **Would you recommend it to others, and why?**

I would recommend the experience to anyone who is thinking of joining the scheme. Give it a go – it's painless.

### **Do you feel valued and supported?**

I know that my contributions are valued by both staff and students.

**“My confidence in group situations has improved and I am not nervous any more about expressing my opinions.”**

# John B

## **How did you become involved with the College's health programmes?**

Four years ago I heard about it through another organisation (University of the Third Age). I came to an introductory meeting and decided, as a patient, that it sounded interesting.

## **What have you gained from the experience?**

Being able to use my experience of life, and as a patient to help in the education of the next generation of people working in the NHS.

## **What activities are you involved in?**

Helping with interviews of candidates for courses in Nursing, Paramedics and Cardiac Physiologists. Talking to students about my experience of my medical conditions. Helping the Paramedic department with the certification of their degree course. Getting involved with research projects in the College, both for students and graduates

## **Would you recommend it to others, and why?**

Well, it works for me but you need to decide for yourself.

**“Come and talk to us, try it out and see if it could work for you.”**



## **Do you feel valued and supported?**

Yes, we work with others in a similar position and the role is positively supported by the College.

## **What advice would you give to someone thinking about getting involved?**

Come and talk to us, try it out and see if it could work for you. 'We have a mantra – you can do as much, or as little as you are comfortable with'.

## **What do you enjoy most about being involved?**

Meeting people of all ages, including students at the start of their journey, and giving something back to the NHS.

## **Please contact:**

Julia Terry

[j.terry@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:j.terry@swansea.ac.uk)

01792 518561



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