

NES Pharmacy Podcast – Advanced Practice – Maxine McCabe

Elsbeth Boxall

Hello and welcome to the next in our series of Advanced Practice Pharmacy Podcasts. Today, we're joined by Maxine McCabe, who has recently credentialed in Advanced Practice and is in fact the first community pharmacist in the UK to credential in Advanced Practice, so really looking forward to hearing about your journey Maxine. So, can you just start by introducing yourself, tell us a bit about your current pharmacy roles?

Maxine McCabe

Yeah. So good morning and thank you so much for having me along on to the podcast. So, my name is Maxine McCabe, and I am by background, a Community Pharmacist, as you've said, and have been working in Community Pharmacy since qualifying back in 2008. Currently I do a split role, so I work part of my week in clinical practice and Community Pharmacy offering prescribing services, mainly Pharmacy First Plus as well as running one of the Teach and Treat Hub Centres for Scotland and I also work part of my week with NES in the Prescribing and Clinical Skills team as well. So, a bit of a bit of a mixed role and both complement each other really well.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, that does that sound like a really nice mix Maxine and using all your skills to help others as well, which is excellent and I guess just, we are obviously talking about Advanced Practice particularly today, so what was it that motivated you to start working towards your Advanced Practice credentialing?

Maxine McCabe

So, I... I suppose I've been a prescriber for a number of years now in Community pharmacy, started off back when, you know, when there were not so many community pharmacists running prescribing clinics and for the last five years as I've mentioned have been running Pharmacy First Plus and I think for me, over that time I've, you know, developed my scope of practice and increased the population of patients that I am seeing and when RPS introduced the advanced practice credentialing, I thought that I really liked the idea of four pillar working and, you know, showcasing, I suppose, that community pharmacists could also undertake advanced practice roles and incorporate elements of education and research into their everyday, everyday work, so I think for me, there was a bit of personal development there and how I could personally develop myself and also a bit of showcasing I suppose, can, can this be achieved in a community pharmacy setting which I know can often be challenging?

I suppose the other thing for me is as pharmacists take on more advanced roles across all sectors and settings, I think it's important that we provide some assurance to our patients of the level of practice that we're working at as we take on these advanced roles, so again for me I thought advanced practice credentialing was a good way to do that for the patients.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, that makes sense, Maxine. So yeah, it's like it's for, for yourself, but also for the, for the patients. It's like it does, it does show that quality assurance, which is, is so important and I guess you, you referred to the four pillars there as, as well and I think that is it's really important to map to those. Did you did you find any particularly helpful resources along the way that helps you to sort of map your work?

Maxine McCabe

Yes, I think it can be, can seem quite daunting when you start out and there's, there's so much information out there. I certainly find a good a good starting place was the RPS website. So RPS provide lots of very useful resources on the website that essentially talk you through the e-portfolio, the different evidence types and the different support networks that you might want to think about when you're starting off and I think for me support networks is, is something that's really important to highlight.

So, looking at who you are potentially are going to work alongside in terms of collaborators, educational supervisors and mentors because this is definitely not a journey that you can do on your own, and I think we need to build that support network around you to, you know, to support you through that journey and RPS provide lots of, lots of really useful resources to be able to do that. Also, NES have lots of really useful information on the TURAS website as well.

So, there are advanced practice pages with lots of good examples from people who have past credentialised. There are webinars and again lots of information about evidence types and how to use them. So, for me that was the that was the sort of starting point of the journey, was to familiarise myself with these resources, in particular the different evidence types, and then take it from there.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, that, that's, that's really helpful to highlight, highlight those because they're quite easy to access as well and just kind of be accessed in your own, you know, in your own time and, and when you're able to do that so, so that, that's very positive. On the flipside, did you, did you find any particular barriers along the way, Maxine, and if you did, can you kind of describe how you overcame those?

Maxine McCabe

Yeah. I mean, I think I started... I opened the portfolio and started the journey at a time actually when I was about to change, change roles as well so that for me personally was, was a challenge because there was lots of changes in a, in a short space of time. But fortunately, I was able to, to settle into those roles well and, you know, sort of continue the journey and, you know, discussions with, I suppose, line managers is really important just to make sure that you've got the support of them and they understand your journey and they're there to give you that support as you go through, you go through the process but I think, the kind of elephant in the room is always around time, isn't it?

The biggest barrier that everyone tends to face in our sort of sector of practice is time and how do we fit it in with our day job and the current demands within the healthcare setting, you know, we're all facing currently. How, how did I overcome that barrier of time? You know we can't create more time; we have 24 hours in a day. So, for me it was about how can I be more efficient in what I do? You know, it's, it's definitely not a sprint, it is a marathon and there is no set time scales in which you have to complete the portfolio.

But I think for me, I work better when I work to deadlines, so I find it really useful to, I suppose, to set myself deadlines for certain, perhaps pieces of evidence or you know, certain reports that I wanted to have done and again, I just felt that helped keep me on track over the kind of a 12 to 18 months of, of sort of working through that process and again everybody works differently and everybody will, will start at a different point in the journey, but I think setting aside dedicated time each week in my sort of diary was also really useful so that again, I just had that that focus of I know that I'd set aside, you know, so many hours per week to purely focus on the portfolio and again, just keeping notes as I went through my general working week as well.

So, the idea of the portfolio is that it's things that you do in your everyday practice. You know you; you shouldn't necessarily have to go out and find opportunities for every single piece of evidence. Lots of it is just you showcasing what you do on a day-to-day basis in your practice and for your patients and, and, you know, for your team members as well. So, I think having a notebook and just keeping, keeping notes of cases that come up that you can use as case-based discussions for example is really useful because there's lots of things that you might think are just part of your everyday role, but actually they provide a really rich piece of evidence for the portfolio. So, I also find that useful as well.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's excellent, Maxine, like hugely practical tips there that I think will be really helpful for everyone because you're absolutely right. I think time is the one that we all cite as, as a potential barrier and what you've described there is, is a really practical way to try and manage that. So, thank you. I guess the other thing that people maybe want to ask you is

what do you feel you you've personally gained from the advanced practice journey? What's your kind of, what's that, what's that given you, by credentialing in advanced practice, do you think?

Maxine McCabe

I think for me personally, the, the journey has been one that I have definitely identified has helped me to become a much more reflective practitioner. So, we, we are busy, and we often go through our day, and we do a role, and we do our job but how do we then really sit and reflect on what's happened and how perhaps can we change things for the better or can we take that practice to the next level?

So, I think for me it's definitely highlighted that's something that I wanted to do more of and have definitely been able to do that through the journey. Again, the other thing is around actively requesting feedback, so we get lots of ad hoc feedback from colleagues and from patients, but asking for feedback in a more formal manner I think is really useful again to just to develop yourself as a practitioner.

So, asking more experienced, more advanced colleagues for feedback on your consultation skills or your, you know, clinical assessment skills, for example, is, is a really useful way of highlighting what people see you as doing really well, but also where there's maybe some opportunities and also part of the feedback from others was actually in areas that perhaps I was working really well, how I could then take that to the next level. So, for me, you know the advanced practice credentialing process is over, but it's definitely not the end of the journey and there's been lots of things throughout this process that I've identified that I would really like to continue to work on and take to that next step, which again is around enhancing my scope of practice for the benefit of the patients, you know that I serve and so that's definitely been something that I've that I've gained from this process and hopefully can continue to take forward.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, that that's actually a really good point, Maxine, isn't it? It's just thinking of it as not a kind of closed process, it's like what, what it then moves you on to do in the future. So that is really helpful to get us thinking about that as well. I guess just maybe just to round up, if you if you were to give people your sort of top tips for kind of getting started with advanced practice and, and keeping motivated with it, what, what would you, you say are the most important things you would tell people?

Maxine McCabe

So, the first thing I'd say is just open the portfolio, yeah? So just go on, create an account and open the portfolio and start, start to have a look because I think it won't be scary as people often think and as I've highlighted earlier, use the resources that are out there. Just

to really familiarise yourself with, with the process we've got, you know, a number of people who have been through the journey already.

So, I think we've got a range of top tips out there. NES have an advanced practice newsletter which has advice from numerous people who've been through the process, so I would say go on and use their knowledge of the process to, to help yourself because they've already been through it, they know a lot of what works, and perhaps what doesn't. So, use those top tips to really save yourself time and, and get some quick wins.

Other sort of top tips for me would be around working with sort of collaborators, so I think it's really key when we're working with collaborators to make life easy for ourselves is let them know what you expect from their feedback. So be quite clear what, what feedback are you looking for; what part of that process? What part of that consultation is it that you're looking to gain feedback on? You can direct them to some of the resources, in particular, the assessment blueprint, which has quite specific details around the sort of learning outcomes and some of the wording that they use. So, I think it's really important for both yourself and for your collaborators to really understand the sort of learning outcomes in the wordings and use that in the feedback to really highlight what was your part in that particular piece of evidence. And again, it's all about triangulation. Yeah? So really, be clear when you're producing evidence: what was your role within that scenario, what were the outputs and then make sure most importantly that you're reflecting on that. How did that influence your practice and how can you use that to take forward? So, the triangulation part of the model is really, really important to remember as well.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, that's, that's really helpful, Maxine. It's, it's really helpful that you've pointed out all those resources. I think that's like, as you say, a really good starting point for people. and we'll definitely make sure that those are available, on the links to those are available through the podcast website.

Absolutely been great to talk to you, Maxine. Thank you so, so much. You're an inspiration to us all, I think, having gone through this journey and obviously continuing to, to use those skills going forward. So, thanks for your time, Maxine. Much appreciated and as I say, we will link to the resources we've talked about in the podcast website, and I hope you've all enjoyed listening to us today. Thank you.