



**Imperial College**  
Academic Health  
Science Centre  
Improving Patient Care

Research  
Careers  
Case Study



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#### *RESEARCH: SWALLOW EVALUATION AND REHABILITATION AFTER LARYNGECTOMY.*

*How did you get into research?* I have always been passionate about my area of clinical expertise, (swallow evaluation and rehabilitation). I was always interested in participating in research but the opportunities to do so after I completed my primary degree seemed limited particularly for AHPs. I went to the US after completing my Masters and had the opportunity to work with leaders in my field who combined research with clinical work. This encouraged and inspired me to get into research. I was then fortunate to have the ability to make my research aspirations a reality through the outstanding support I received at Imperial College Healthcare Trust enabling me to make a successful application to the NIHR for a Clinical Doctoral Fellowship.

*What do you enjoy about research?* I love that research is so much more exciting and far less daunting than I thought it would be. I love the discovery involved in research and the ability to make a meaningful and patient directed difference to clinical care. I also enjoy the autonomy involved in research and problem solving the inevitable obstacles that occur. For me, research opened up a whole new world of skills, which enhanced my clinical practice. For instance, to my surprise, I really enjoyed learning about and performing statistical analysis. This skill now allows me to critically appraise journal articles accurately and helps me understand the evidence underpinning practice in my field.

*What was the most difficult aspect of doing your PhD?* I have to admit that I enjoyed every minute of my PhD even the tough parts. Writing up my thesis and submitting it on time while battling early pregnancy related illness was probably the most difficult part of my PhD but there was such a sense of accomplishment once it was completed.

*What difference has your research training and experience made to your career?* My research training and experience has increased my career options. Having a PhD has not closed any doors but has opened several. I can now continue on a clinical pathway, combine a clinical post with research one, or work towards gaining an academic teaching post. As a result of my PhD, I now have the opportunity to present my research nationally and internationally.

*What has made a difference to progressing your research career?*

*Being in the right place at the right time.* Working at ICHT, the first Academic Health Science Centre in the UK allowed me to access the expertise and support to make my dreams of having a research career a reality..

*Identifying the right mentors* who not only encouraged me but helped advise on funding applications and with preparation for clinical academic interviews.

*The ability to be an effective networker* and promote my work has been fundamental to my development as a Clinical Academic. It's also been invaluable to develop support from peers within and outside my profession.

*Where do you see your clinical academic career going over the next five years?* I definitely want to combine clinical work with research. I hope to complete a NIHR Clinical Lectureship and to be on my way to attaining a NIHR Senior Clinical Lectureship position. I also want to mentor other AHPs to see research as a viable and enjoyable career option. ♦



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