



IN CONVERSATION WITH

ONLINE
EXCLUSIVE

Paula Allchorne

We were delighted to catch up with **Paula Allchorne, Chair of the European Association of Urology Nurses (EAUN)** about her career in urological nursing and her plans for the association.

Can you tell us a little bit about what led you firstly into nursing and then to specialise in the field of urology?

I first thought about becoming an A&E nurse when watching *Casualty* on TV and thinking that looks 'fun' with so much drama and excitement. After graduating I moved to London to take up my first job at St Thomas' covering urology. I then worked as a junior sister at Guys with such luminaries as Prokar Dasgupta, Rick Popert, Tim O'Brien and Jonathan Glass. After that I was permanently hooked on urology and moved onto Barts to become a urology cancer clinical nurse specialist (CNS). I have never worked in A&E; perhaps urology has enough drama to cope with!

What have been the highlights of your career so far?

Continually improving services is very important to me so instead of studying for a nursing masters I completed an Executive MBA in Health Service Management in 2013. This gave me a different perspective on healthcare and has allowed me to spend the last 10 years of my career striving to improve the quality of care received. My consultants nominated me for Urology Nurse of the Year in 2018, which was a complete surprise and a great honour to win, following on from other inspirational urology nurses who have won it before and since.

What has been the best piece of advice that you have received in your career and what advice would you offer to those following in your footsteps?

My advice would be 'find an area you enjoy, develop it and then share that knowledge'. Things can always be improved upon so always ask your colleagues and patients for ideas and feedback to improve care. Learn to communicate and do things out of your comfort zone. I hate public speaking but if you are talking about something you have a passion for and want to share, it is important to get the message out whether it's through publication or giving a lecture. Lecturing has allowed me to change practice in China, when I spoke to over 50,000 clinicians, and also to travel to New Zealand to share ideas on improving care.

What do you think have been the most exciting developments in urological nursing in recent years?

With the support of our surgical and oncological colleagues, and the pivotal role of the British Association of Urological Nurses (BAUN) we have been given the opportunity to develop urology nursing to an advanced level. When visiting other countries, it is amazing to share how the UK roles of CNS and advanced practitioners have delivered improvements in holistic patient care.

I believe wholeheartedly in the value of multidisciplinary working that we have trailblazed in the UK. Some parts of Europe are less multidisciplinary and their nurses need to be more actively supported in delivering holistic care. To encourage this approach, we are encouraging every urology department in Europe to support at least one nurse in their department to join the EAUN.

You are the current Chair of the EAUN; how did you get involved and what would you like to achieve while in the role?

I joined the EAUN board originally as I wanted to make a difference to patient care. The EAUN provides a worldwide platform for nurses to share their knowledge. UK nurses are so lucky already to be supported by BAUN. Imagine if the best of UK nursing practices could be extended to Europe or even globally. The EAUN gives us an amazing opportunity to showcase how dynamic urology nursing is in the UK, and can shape the delivery of urological patient care across Europe.

What projects will the EAUN be focusing on in 2022?

While I'm the Chair of the EAUN I want to focus on standardising then improving the quality of urological nursing care, as it is very varied across Europe. To support this important aim, I am collaborating with some amazing colleagues across the world; from EAUN, BAUN and the Australia & New Zealand Urological Nurses Society (ANZUNS) to develop an Educational Framework for Urological Nursing (EFUN) – the first one ever developed.

Would you encourage other urology nurses from the UK to get involved?

Definitely, as there are some great opportunities. There is a scholarship programme for nurses to visit another hospital in Europe, to broaden their knowledge, identify areas of practice that could be improved or widen their scope of practice (Fellowship programme). There are Special Interest Groups (SIGs) for nurses with a special knowledge about specific urological issues to exchange experiences and investigate urological nursing issues related to their topic group. The SIGs help develop guidelines, deliver state of the art sessions at our annual conference, and run European School of Urology Nursing (ESUN) courses and webinars.

There is the opportunity to join Guideline Committees. Building on the success of the previous guidelines which are used all over the world to standardise care. And there is a three-day annual nursing conference. It's a very friendly meeting to encourage multidisciplinary working and collaboration. Nursing delegates also have access to the EAU conference, which runs parallel. The EAUN also run webinars, e-courses and urological updates as well as the ESUN courses – where 25 nurses from across the world attend with the aim to return to their departments, share the knowledge and improve patient care.

And finally, if you have any spare time, what do you do to relax?

I try and travel and scuba dive as much as I can – which has been a problem during COVID. It's my time away from my laptop and it's harder to contact me underwater!! I'm also a keen gardener which I spent a lot of time doing during the pandemic when I had any downtime!

Many thanks for your time!

Visit <https://nurses.uroweb.org/> for further information about the EAUN.