



*Written by Harriet in Year 8*

Cambridge University Hospital (located on the outskirts of Cambridge) provides “emergency, surgical and medical care for local people”. The site includes research, training and various different hospitals including a Nightingale hospital which they are constructing currently on the premises. Addenbrooke’s is specialised in medical teaching and neuroscience, it has a reputation of “excellence”.

As we approach the 1 year anniversary of when our country first went into lockdown, it gives us time to reflect and think about the past year. From when the pandemic began in 2020 until early January 2021 there have been a shocking number of 18,796 positive COVID 19 tests in Cambridgeshire (still continuing to rise).

My sister and I had the wonderful opportunity of speaking to Sam Petty, a consultant physio who works in intensive care at Addenbrooke’s hospital to find out more about her experiences of the pandemic.

Sam specialises in respiratory (breathing and the lungs). She has a number of different jobs to fit into her busy schedule, one of which includes changing Tracheostomy tubes. These tubes help get oxygen to the lungs if the patient is struggling to breath, and can be used in emergency circumstances as well as in the hospital. She also leads a team at Addenbrookes hospital, her job is to ensure that the physios are “safe and happy”. As the pandemic went on, she described that the communication of her team was even better. Sam had to have a lot of chest physio as a child from an underlying health condition; this caused her many hurdles in her career one of which was when she was studying at university, she got sick and had to skip the course work that she had been studying. This inspired her to become what she is today.



During the pandemic there have been many challenges, one of which including the incoming ventilators. The new ventilators that the staff were given early on didn't work very well, so they had to work around the clock. Within a week they had installed new ventilators and taught staff how to use them, and the staff were ready and doing everything they could to make sure that any COVID 19 patients that entered the door could get the treatment that they needed. Not allowing visitors to see their loved ones at the ends of their lives was one of the main challenges that staff in intensive care faced throughout the pandemic. The one exception to visit was when patients were on the verge of dying. This was hard on everyone, hospital staff and families. Every day, when Sam enters and leaves work, she has to do something called a handover; staff who have been working day and night shifts when she has not been there give her an update on how the patients have been getting on in the last 24hrs.

Sam's friends would describe her as "mentally resilient", she states. One of Sam's ways of taking a break from the hospital is to "sit and chat" to friends and to "let off steam". Working in intensive care is a hard job, but there are definitely rewarding aspects to her job. Seeing patients in a follow up appointment managing well was one of Sam's highlights of her job that she mentioned.

Sam strongly believes that the lockdown restrictions should be controlled in a "scientific way" and should be eased week by week, referring to the daily death rates and how many confirmed positive cases there are. However, she did mention that it is very important for mental wellbeing and social skills to see people outside your household.

We asked Sam to give some advice to children aiming to become health care professionals in the future. Firstly "work hard at school" and she mentioned the different subjects that are needed to become a health professional and how different jobs in the hospital will require different knowledge and different specialist subjects. There are such a variety of jobs in the health care community; scientists, researchers, neuroscientists and physios but there are huge amounts of other jobs that as Sam says, "offer a pathway which suits you."

This interview has given me more knowledge of what it has been like working in the NHS during the pandemic; it has shown me the extreme challenges that hospitals have had to face but also the positive achievements. I would finally like to say a huge thank you to Sam for giving up the spare time to talk to us, it

was really an honour. Also a huge thank you to those colleges and NHS workers fighting on the frontline, thank you.