

MARION CARROLL SIZE 7

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The getting ready in the morning. I like to call it 'the calm before the storm'. I usually arrive sort of between twenty to and quarter to eight, in order to fire up my machine and get all the systems going, ready for the eight o'clock kick off! We have a walk-in centre here, we have our GP surgery, which is King's Park surgery, it's a bustling, busy clinic. People actually come here with broken fingernails. I kid you not. But we are in Essex.

My name's Marion Carroll and I work at the Harold Wood polyclinic. I am a receptionist/administrator, which I really enjoy.

Eight o'clock comes, the walk in patients then come in. Try to be nice and smiley, when they come through the door. You know, there's just lots of bodies, lots of noise. People not knowing where they've got to go and frustrated and stuff so, yeah, it can be quite busy, very busy. I think busy is the word.

Phones start ringing immediately. Most of them, I would say, would be for emergency on-the-day appointments. So you have to try and fit them in as best you can. On a normal kind of day, there's anything from between a dozen to two dozen appointments, depending on how many doctors we've got and how many appointments haven't been used already. Because the on-the-day appointments aren't supposed to get booked until the day, but some of them do for emergency cases. So then that kind of decreases the number that we've got available, which then has the knock on effect of causing a few little problems. "I'm afraid the appointments for today have all gone now. It would have to be in emergency or out of hours I'm afraid."

When I started, which was about three years ago, we had about one to one and a half thousand patients, and, since then, we now have six and a half thousand patients, which is quite a large number of patients to deal with on a daily basis and they can be, some of them, quite demanding. I have great sympathy for them. It's horrible. If you've got a little child who's not very well and is crying and, you know, you want, you just want to be seen quickly, get them sorted, get home. It's awful it really is. And, you know, I do try to be as helpful as possible, and if I think that little one is very poorly or something, I'll ask the nurse to come and do a quick safety assessment just to make sure they're OK to wait. And then there's other patients, who walk in and you just know immediately that they are extremely ill and they can't wait and you just have to get somebody out so it's a little bit of knowing your audience, really, if that's the right expression.

Sometimes patients arrive at the surgery and I think they're already kind of, I can't think of the word really, but they're perhaps, not aggressive, that sounds, that's perhaps not the right word, but going that way, because they think they're going to have to fight to actually be seen, and then I think it's a surprise when we're not like that, we're actually quite helpful. We get swearsy patients quite often, people sometimes that obviously you just can't help, because you know they just want to be rude to you, and it can be quite difficult to cope with.

The worst time of day would be end of day, because we have to stop taking patients, because we need to see everybody by eight o'clock. I remember one lady who came with her husband for something like a throat infection, so you know it wasn't life threatening, and we had offered alternatives, and she said to me "I hope you die." Well, thank you. And I'm sorry you feel like that but I can't do anything about it.

We definitely help each other through times like that, because sometimes it can be horrible, if that, if a patient is nasty to you, it can be quite upsetting really, and, you know, you have your

colleagues, and they say "Oh, you know, don't worry about it, you know, it's not you, it's them!"
That old cliché!

You build up a rapport with some of your patients, who are just so lovely, and I think, you know, that just kind of makes your job worthwhile. There's one particular patient I can think of at the moment, who's really going through it. He's always been a bit poorly, but the cancer has been sort of spreading over this three year period, and now he only has weeks to live and he's such such a lovely man, and his wife makes him come out in the car every now and again and she'll just say "He's outside," and we all run out and speak to him in the car. And I think you can be quite sad when you lose people that you've become really quite close to, and I just find that a little bit tough, I have to say.

I would say there must be over three hundred documents a day that come into the clinic and, if you're doing the sort of admin side of that, you have to scan all those notes on to the G.P. test results that come through electronically every day. Also electronic documents that come through from a&e department, all of that's got to be dealt with. There's always a massive amount of forms to put on for new patients, and there's always a big pile of them. You know sometimes it's quite disheartening, because you'll sit and you'll think "Right, I've done ten today," and you'll get twelve in, just on the desk

I never ever wake up in the morning and think I don't want to go to work. I do, I really, really like my job, I love it, and I think what makes it so good, all the people I work with, lovely, lovely people, you know how some, some places there's always one person who's a little bit, you know. We don't have that here. It's great and it's nice to care for people and see that you've helped people. A lady came in with a suspected UTI, which is like a urinary tract infection - pains in tummy, went to see our nurse practitioner, and, yes, there was protein in the urine, and so it looked as though it was an infection. Prescribed some antibiotics, husband was waiting in the waiting room, she said "Oh, I'm just going to go to the loo, my tummy doesn't feel right at all. She phoned her husband from the loo and said "Please get one of the receptionists to come in right now." And lo and behold! there was a little head poking out - lady was having a baby, didn't know she was pregnant! Wow. There was action stations that day, and one of my colleagues was new, he was just training, and I heard my other colleagues shout to him "OK, phone an ambulance," and he said "What number do I dial?" She said "999, you idiot!" It was just mad, absolutely mad. Baby, poor baby, was born down the toilet - our GP had to fish him out and make sure that he was all OK - dealt with mum and everything. And he was called Harry after Harold Wood Polyclinic, and one of our doctors made me laugh and said "If it was a girl, would it have been called Polly?" - absolutely fabulous teamwork is all I can say. The team was absolutely amazing that day.