

Nikki Munro

Advanced Specialist Orthotist, WESTMARC, Southern General Hospital Glasgow

Biography

1990

Prosthetics and Orthotics undergraduate University of Strathclyde

Nikki chose this degree because she wanted a career within the allied health professions, and was intrigued by the field: "I found it in the prospectus and had no idea what it was". She had looked at pharmacy and radiography as possibilities, but was interested by the practical as well as academic elements of the course. She graduated in 1993 with an honours degree in prosthetics and orthotics. Nikki describes orthotics as "'body scaffolding' - I will build a device around the part of the body that is not functioning as it should to improve the way it works, keep it immobilised until it heals or reduce pain by relieving pressure from it". Prosthetists and orthotists are a very important part of a rehabilitation team.

1993

Munro Bolton Orthotics

Nikki went straight into work from university with a commercial orthotics company sub-contracted to the NHS, a common practice for orthotists. She was initially mentored by Willie Munro, her boss at the time, a well-known and respected figure within orthotics specialising in the treatment of the diabetic foot. She worked in orthotic clinics in the west of Scotland and steadily built a specialist workload in neuro rehab, with a caseload that took her to hospitals all over the west of Scotland, from Argyll and Clyde to Glasgow and Lanarkshire. "In each hospital over the years there were opportunities to work with individuals I had come to know or for new clinics that were being developed to need an orthotist, so that slowly over time my caseload became less generic and more specialised." Nikki stayed with Munro Bolton for 12 years, gradually building a specialism in neurology-related services.

2005

Becoming a specialist

From working in the National Spinal Injuries Unit at the Southern General (SGH) in Glasgow, Nikki always had a high proportion of adult neuro clinics. As physio staff rotated through this unit, they would ask her to do clinics elsewhere with them in the SGH as they moved on to other departments. The SGH is a regional and national centre for neurological problems, so almost by accident Nikki's caseload became increasingly neuro specialist, encompassing stroke and multiple sclerosis patients, and patients with profound longstanding neurological problems. Nikki found orthotics more appealing than prosthetics: "Orthotics has a much younger average age of patient client and is much more varied. It can be very challenging, as even with 15 years' experience there will be new problems I have not yet come across, so the job entails constant problem-solving and thinking of new ways to tackle unusual presentations."

2008

Neuro rehab

This is where I will supply an orthosis to improve the function of a part of the body which is not working due to a neurological impairment. This covers stroke, traumatic brain injury, and diseases like MS and MND. We have a number of inpatient neuro rehab units where my job is to allow people to get up and walk as soon as possible after their brain injury, to try to get them back to normal life without delay. In many cases, wearing an orthosis can make the difference between someone going back to their own home independent rather than being in care or having to depend on carers. I get great satisfaction from seeing someone, who a few weeks or months before could not get out of bed,

walk out of the unit on their way home. I like the fact that in neuro rehab you have an instant and dramatic effect."