



NICKY EDDISON

Role: Associate Professor

Institution: University of Staffordshire

RESEARCH STORY

I have always loved learning and I have an inquisitive mind. Very shortly after I graduated, I started to miss the academic setting of the university and I started to look for opportunities to get back into academia.

I found it challenging to access any research opportunities at my place of work, bearing in mind that research within the AHP space was not as ubiquitous 17 years ago as it is now.

As fortune would have it; I was working alongside a podiatrist who happened to have a research position at Staffordshire University. He encouraged me to make contact with the Professor who led the team. I reached out to Professor Nachiappan Chockalingam all those years back and asked him if he would be interested in some of the research ideas I had. We had a meeting and he encouraged me to complete a PgC and a range of research method courses. His concern was the lack of protective time I had to carry out my studies within my working week.

I completed the courses he asked of me, I then completed a literature review, and several short papers, and he could see I wasn't going to go away! He agreed to supervise my PhD and I have been with the team ever since, as a PhD student, a Post Doc Fellow, a senior Research Fellow, and now in my current role as an Associate Professor.

During that time, I have developed a portfolio of research, my work has been

presented at international conferences, and I have had the honour of being invited as a keynote speaker. I have always tried to empower other prosthetists and orthotists to engage with research, providing them with opportunities and helping them whenever they have reached out to me. I know how important support is in the early stages of a research career.

My research journey has been so rewarding I can honestly say I have loved every minute of it. But that doesn't mean it has been without its challenges. I had to work on my research in my own time for well over a decade before I was supported with protected time, which made a huge difference to my work-life balance.

RESEARCH TIPS

- Seek out a mentor. BAPO have a mentoring programme with several researchers listed as mentors. Reach out to them and ask them questions to make use of their knowledge and experience.
- Take the opportunity to apply for BAPO's and Staffordshire University's Research Hub. This initiative provides the opportunity to learn about research whilst taking part in a research project with an experienced research team to guide you.
- Be aware that a career in research can be competitive and seek advice when applying for grants and funding.
- Constructive criticism is a fundamental part of research, whether it be from your supervisor, research colleagues, at conferences, or through peer review. It requires resilience and an understanding that it is a learning process.

