

Enhanced Practice

Case Study:

Laura Troiano

Overview

Laura is a specialist dietitian and non-medical prescriber (NMP) working across community services at the upper end of the enhanced level. She combines a clinical role with team lead responsibilities and is a practice supervisor for people undertaking the NMP module. Laura established, and now chairs, the Scottish NMP Dietitians Network and represents dietitians nationwide via the Scottish NMP Lead Group. She also acts as co-chair of the Scottish GI Network and is a member of the IBD subgroup.

Developing from entry level into enhanced

After earning a Postgraduate Diploma in Human Nutrition and Dietetics in 2003 and following a supportive practice-based learning experience within the Glasgow community team, Laura initially secured a locum position before moving into a permanent role with the team. This allowed more autonomy and flexibility, which was important to enable her to balance work and life, after becoming a parent.

From early in her career, Laura held a strong interest in dietary treatment of gastrointestinal conditions such as IBS. Prior to a wider acceptance of the benefits of dietary interventions, such as the low FODMAP protocol, this was a condition that was not well understood, leading to challenges in its long-term management. By completing an approved FODMAP course in 2016, and using her leadership and facilitated learning skills, Laura was pivotal in developing NHS Scotland's 'Once for Scotland' approach for treatment of IBS. Laura trained 60 dietitians between 2018-2019, incorporating standardised approaches for utilising FODMAP dietary treatment into Scottish healthcare pathways.



Laura completed an accredited NMP module as she recognised the significant overlap between dietary and pharmacology management in conditions such as diabetes and GI disorders. Becoming a Supplementary Prescriber (SP), annotated with the HCPC, has significantly influenced her practice. Currently, as Team Lead, she manages outpatient dietetic services in Forth Valley, focusing on people presenting with gastrointestinal issues, requiring nutritional support, and those within a care home setting. She integrates prescribing skills into dietetic care allowing more holistic interventions. She also collaborates with the pharmacy team to submit formulary requests, develop prescribing pathways, and create guidelines.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Laura recognised the benefit of utilising digital options to engage populations. She developed new digital service methods, including the Connect Me app for IBS, which improves access to services as well as reducing waiting times.

With nearly six years as a prescribing dietitian, Laura leads NMP dietitians on her board and serves as a Practice Supervisor. She supports AHP and pharmacy colleagues in achieving their prescribing hours. Laura is involved with the BDA prescribing group which is actively pursuing legislation change to allow independent prescribing for dietitians.

In 2022 and 2023, Laura presented abstracts at the BDA Research Symposium, marking the start of her active engagement and interest in research to demonstrate impact, which she plans to continue.

Role Impact

Research and evidence show that dietetic-led interventions to manage gastrointestinal disorders enable a person-centred approach that allows better adherence to dietary interventions. Additionally, incorporating supplementary prescribing capability allows for more integrated care, where dietary and nutritional aspects of treatment can be managed simultaneously with medication. The result is improved symptom

management and quality of life, leading to positive service-user experience and outcomes.

Career Aspirations

Laura has achieved a lot in her career and is proud to be working at the upper end of the enhanced level of practice. Her role blends leadership responsibilities with the aspects of clinical practice and she is keen to maintain this service-user contact. Through her work with the BDA and nationally across Scotland, she is determined to push for independent prescriber status for the profession. In addition, she is continuing her professional development by taking on a Healthcare Leadership course at University of Stirling, starting in 2025.

How does Laura work across the 4 pillars of practice?

Laura embeds the principles of all 4 pillars within her practice and feels she is strong in the 'professional practice' and 'leadership' pillars. She is developing her "research and evidence" pillar through submitting abstracts to the BDA research symposium and her 'facilitated learning' through the supervision she provides to NMP learners. Laura also offers practice-based learning opportunities to enable dietetic learners to understand dietetic prescribing practice. She makes use of her own practice supervision and appraisal sessions to develop her personal development plan that addresses any identified learning needs and career aspirations.

