



BDA

Volunteer Corner

Francesca Tabacchi explains how she got involved in volunteering with the Oncology Palliative Care Specialist Sub Group

Volunteer name: **Francesca Tabacchi**
 Place of work: **Oxford University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**
 Position: **Oncology Specialist Dietitian**
 BDA volunteer role: **Member of the Oncology Palliative Care Specialist Sub Group**

Q How did you get started volunteering with the BDA, and why?

A When I started working as specialist dietitian, part of my role consisted of covering two hospices. Although I was new to providing care to palliative patients, I quickly became determined to provide the best nutritional support to this group of patients. In pursuit of this goal, I reached out to the BDA Palliative Care Sub Group to collaborate, share experiences and contribute to advance this area of dietetics. My involvement in the group was extremely motivating, allowing me to advance my practice and help others. Encouraged by this experience, I also volunteered as Trade Union representative a year later.

Q Briefly describe your BDA volunteer role(s).

A I am a member of the BDA Palliative Care Sub Group, which also includes Jennifer McCracken, Lucy Jenkins, Anne Holdoway, Vivienne Law and Claire Irlam. Our main project currently is on nutritional screening for the palliative population, a very relevant topic to our community. We are preparing to present our findings from two surveys on this subject. In addition, we offer support to colleagues seeking advice in this area. We also contribute to the wider Oncology Specialist Group by participating in the creation of resources and training sessions. We meet regularly to ensure we are addressing relevant topics for our community.

Q What's the best thing/s about volunteering for the BDA?

A One of the best things about volunteering for a specialist sub group is the opportunity for professional growth – feeling part of a community and having the chance to contribute to my own field. By volunteering, I have had the chance to connect with colleagues from different areas, exchange ideas and experiences and collaborate on projects that are relevant to our field. I love to be able to support my specialist area and work towards improving dietetic services and patient care. Overall, volunteering has been an enriching experience that has helped me grow both personally and professionally.

Q What didn't you know about the BDA before you started volunteering?

A Before I began volunteering, I viewed the association as somewhat abstract and distant. However, through volunteering, I have gained a better understanding of how the BDA operates and how much it relies on the individual contributions of its members. Volunteering has shown me that being a part of the BDA means more than just paying membership fees – it means actively participating and making a difference with our expertise and work. It's been inspiring to see how our collective efforts can have a real impact on our profession and on the lives of patients.

Q Would you encourage other members to volunteer for the BDA?

A Yes, definitely! Volunteering has been an amazing source of energy and renewed motivation, especially during these challenging times of staff shortages and increasing workloads. Collaborating with colleagues from other areas and exchanging ideas and innovative approaches has been extremely beneficial for me. Being encouraged to focus on improving our field beyond just clinical work has allowed me to feel empowered in my role as a dietitian. Contributing not only to patient care but also to supporting and uplifting our colleagues has been incredibly fulfilling as well. Through volunteering, I have been able to broaden my knowledge, establish new professional connections and continue working towards improving the standard of care we provide.

WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

Check out our volunteer opportunities online: bda.uk.com/news-campaigns/get-involved/volunteers.html and look out for vacancies in our Members' Monthly e-zine.