



Charlotte Chatwood – My Peritus Health Story

Occupational Health Technician

My name is Charlotte Chatwood and I have worked for Peritus Health Management since June 2019 as an Occupational Health Technician.

Prior to being employed by Peritus I had no knowledge or idea of what an Occupational Health Technician role entailed, so when my Manager recently approached me and asked if I would be interested in writing a blog about the role, I agreed straight away!

My working background is mostly made up of Management / Assessing of Adult Health and Social Care (mainly dementia & palliative care) and I was looking for a new challenge.

When I initially looked at applying for this role, I had to research online so I understood what a Technicians role was, but there wasn't much information out there. I came across a blog from a lady written a few years back which I found helpful but not very detailed. I would like others to understand the pros and cons of a Technicians role and what it is we do daily.

Where do I start?

I would probably say this is one of the most rewarding jobs I have ever had! Of course, I have bad days, stressful days, long days, but who doesn't?

Every day is different, we travel a lot, working in lots of different locations all over the country. We work away and stay away from our families and friends for a few nights or even a week. We work long days, leaving the house before others are even awake, and arriving back home as others are already settled down for the night.

One day we could be working in a health surveillance van which we drive to and from different customer sites, or we could be travelling in our own cars and working in an office at a customer site or at the Peritus offices. These locations are spread throughout the country. I think the furthest north I have worked so far is County Durham and the furthest south was Yeovil.

The plus side to working in different locations and travelling around is being able to visit and see different places such as North Yorkshire where we carry out Health Surveillance and Occupational Hygiene at an Architectural Stone Suppliers, surrounded by countryside. We get to see the Blackpool lights, lots of city centres such as Leeds, Manchester, Bolton, London, Blackburn, Sheffield, Hull, Bristol and many more!

No 2 days are the same!

We carry out health surveillance in several different types of businesses, some very small, some very large, some with multiple hazards/exposures and some very minimal.

We cover every kind of health screening/surveillance you can think of – the main areas are Audiometry, Spirometry, Skin Surveillance, HAVS2 & HAVS3 Assessments, Safety Critical Assessments, Drug & Alcohol testing, Face-Fit testing, Blood pressure checks, plus many more!

Technician must haves

Technicians require the ability to adapt to changes and new ways of working very quickly as every single Customer we work for works differently and have different requirements.

We need to be a 'people person' and by that, I mean we need to be able to communicate with all different types of people, some of which aren't always happy to see us! We need patience and understanding for the clients that we see, as well as professionalism and knowledge to be able to communicate with customers to fulfil their requirements.

Because a technician's role is so varied from day to day, flexibility is a must! We work unsociable hours, including night shifts and working away, all of which are to meet customer requirements.

Training & Support

Our team is made up of lots of different skills and working experiences such as Nurses, Paramedics, Midwives, Physicians, Elderly Care, Management sectors, Sports & Exercise Nutritionists. We can assist one another with different queries and concerns which is very helpful in any kind of health surveillance taking place.

From the day I started at Peritus I have received lots of training and guidance from several team members as well partaking in training courses. There are several different routes of progression with Peritus Health Management, which is something I have always liked about the company, opportunities for progression & CPD.

Good Days & Good Feedback

Most clients that we see are happy to see us, happy to be having health surveillance and generally grateful for what we do to help them.

I have received some wonderful feedback from clients, and I know my colleagues have too, which all help in making us feel appreciated for the hard work we all put in.

I particularly enjoy going back to Customer sites where I first attended 12 months prior and see clients again for the 2nd time and they recognise who you are, and some even remember your name! It's a lovely feeling knowing they're happy to see you and it's nice to have a little catch up with them too!

Feedback

I have recently received feedback about 2 clients, seen at different customer sites (one in Leeds near the airport and one in Calderdale, West Yorkshire) and through carrying out their health surveillance, their lives have been saved, how amazing is that!?

One client attended for his 12 monthly Audiometry & Spirometry surveillance and he wasn't feeling (or looking) very well. I spoke with him and asked his symptoms. He reported he had felt 'off' for a couple of days. I asked if I could take his blood pressure. When I took his blood pressure reading, I discovered that his blood pressure was sky high! I asked his permission to ring his GP on his behalf to book him an appointment, which I did and got him booked in straight away. 12 months on, one of my colleagues attended the customer site to carry out annual health surveillance and she saw this client. The client asked my colleague to pass on his thanks to me as I had saved his life. He visited his GP following my phone call. His GP diagnosed him with high blood pressure and carried out some further tests. He now takes regular medication, and his blood pressure is monitored on a regular basis. His GP said he was a lucky man!

The second client I saw 12 months ago was seen on a night shift. I was at the customer site in Leeds to carry out annual health surveillance (audiometry & spirometry) as well as safety critical worker assessments. This client was booked in for a hearing and breathing test only. After completing his hearing test and reading his results, I found that he had Uni-Lateral hearing loss in one ear. Because of this I referred him to his GP to have this further investigated. I returned to the same customer site around 3-4 weeks ago and management there informed me that I had saved their employee's life. The client visited his GP following my referral and his GP referred him for a head scan. This head scan found a tumour growing close to the affected ear, resulting in

hearing loss in that ear which I had seen on his results. Luckily, this was found early enough to be operated on, and the client is now in his final months of recovery!

Overall, my job is very rewarding, and it is great to see customers putting changes in place to protect their employees and better their ways of working. We have a positive impact on many industries and provide people with information relating to their general health and ways that they can protect themselves as well as improve their overall health.

Charlotte Chatwood

Occupational Health Technician