

Career journey with Fatima Sawab



Q Introduce yourself – what is your name, place of work and job title?

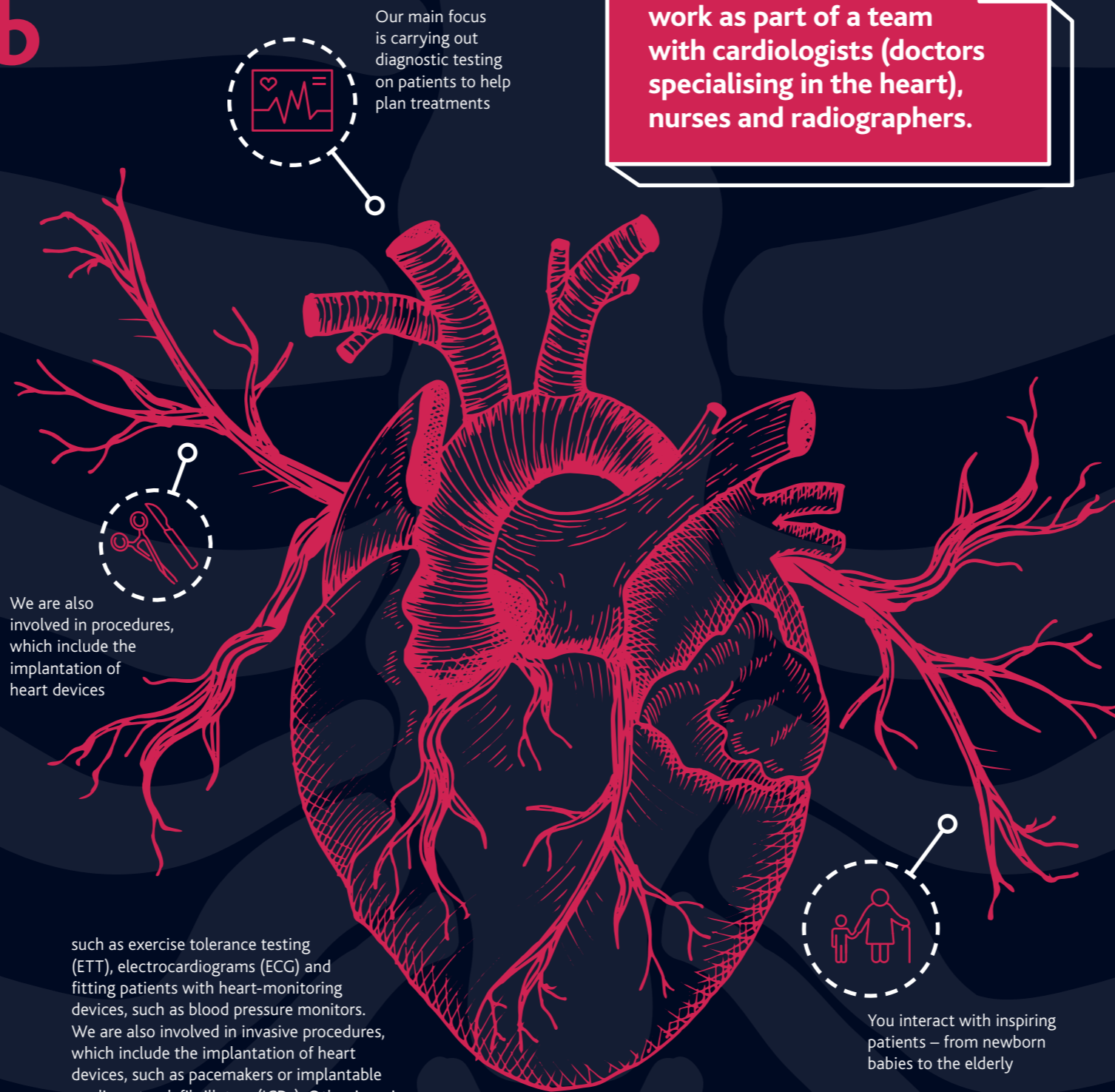
A Hi! My name is Fatima Sawab and I am a cardiac physiologist at the Royal Brompton Hospital.

Q What did you want to be when you were little?

A When I was younger, I surprisingly wanted to become an actress. I regularly took ballet and tap dancing classes, and attended acting school. However, once I was introduced to science in secondary school, I set my sights on the world of healthcare instead.

Q What is the main focus of your work?

A Cardiac physiologists work as part of a team, which consists of other healthcare professionals, such as cardiologists (doctors specialising in the heart), nurses and radiographers. Our main focus is carrying out diagnostic testing on patients with known or suspected heart conditions; this will help plan treatments for patients. We do this by performing procedures



Q How does your work affect our lives or society?

A We are involved in the lives of various people who suffer from a range of heart problems – from newborn babies to the elderly. Our work involves helping patients reach a diagnosis and/or treatment plan. This hopefully allows patients to lead their lives as fully as possible.

Q Talk us through an average workday...

A The beauty of working in healthcare is that no two days are the same! I have the opportunity to work in different clinical environments which keeps my job exciting. For instance, one day I may perform exercise tests in the morning and carry out ECGs in the ECG clinic in the afternoon. On another day, I might be in the catheter labs (this is a specialised lab where cardiologists insert catheters into the structures of the heart for diagnostic information). For each case I would gather a patient history, apply an ECG, provide catheters and other equipment for the procedure, as well as monitor the patient.

Q What's the best thing about your job?

A There are actually two things about my job that stand out for me. The first is meeting and interacting with inspiring patients of various ages and backgrounds. Being able to contribute in their journey to a diagnosis is a very rewarding experience for me. The second best thing would be the many opportunities to learn something new, which helps my knowledge in cardiology grow over time.

Q When and why did you decide to become a cardiac physiologist?

A I decided to choose my university degree in cardiac physiology in 2014 after my own personal experience as a patient. After going through testing and meeting with various members of staff, I decided that I wanted to understand what was happening to me. I also wanted to be able to contribute to the world of cardiology and my degree provided me with these opportunities.

Q What sort of personality or passions do you need to have to pursue your career?

A I would say that a passion for working with people and creating a positive impact on their lives is important. Furthermore, a passion for science would be beneficial.

Q What qualifications did you need to gain to succeed in your career?

A I undertook a university degree in BSc Healthcare Science (Cardiac Physiology), but prior to this I completed my A levels and GCSEs.



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Q Are there alternative routes into your profession – such as apprenticeship schemes?

A To the best of my knowledge (as this is the route that I have taken), a university degree in cardiac physiology is required. However, checking individual requirements from each university is important. Visiting the NHS Health Careers website is also a useful resource for this information.

Q Did you do any work experience in your field? If so did this help you decide what you wanted to do?

A I personally did not carry out work experience in this field as a student, as I had gained my insight by being a patient; it was this experience that motivated me to pursue this career.

Q Do you have any career highlights?

A I have recently graduated and have just started my career, but my greatest personal achievement so far is being awarded first class honours in my degree.