

# Anna Mackway-Jones – a covid internship journey

With grateful thanks to Dr Kirsten Windfuhr and the academics of the ARC (GM) Mental Health theme

## In the beginning

I was a Senior Sister in the Emergency Department of the Manchester Royal Infirmary. I have a Master's in Emergency Nursing and a Postgraduate Certificate in Autonomous Practice in Emergency Care. As the final part of my Master's I undertook a Delphi study to investigate prioritisation of patients who presented to Emergency Departments with mental health problems. Much to my surprise I really enjoyed this research time and was pleased to have taken it to publication. I wanted more.

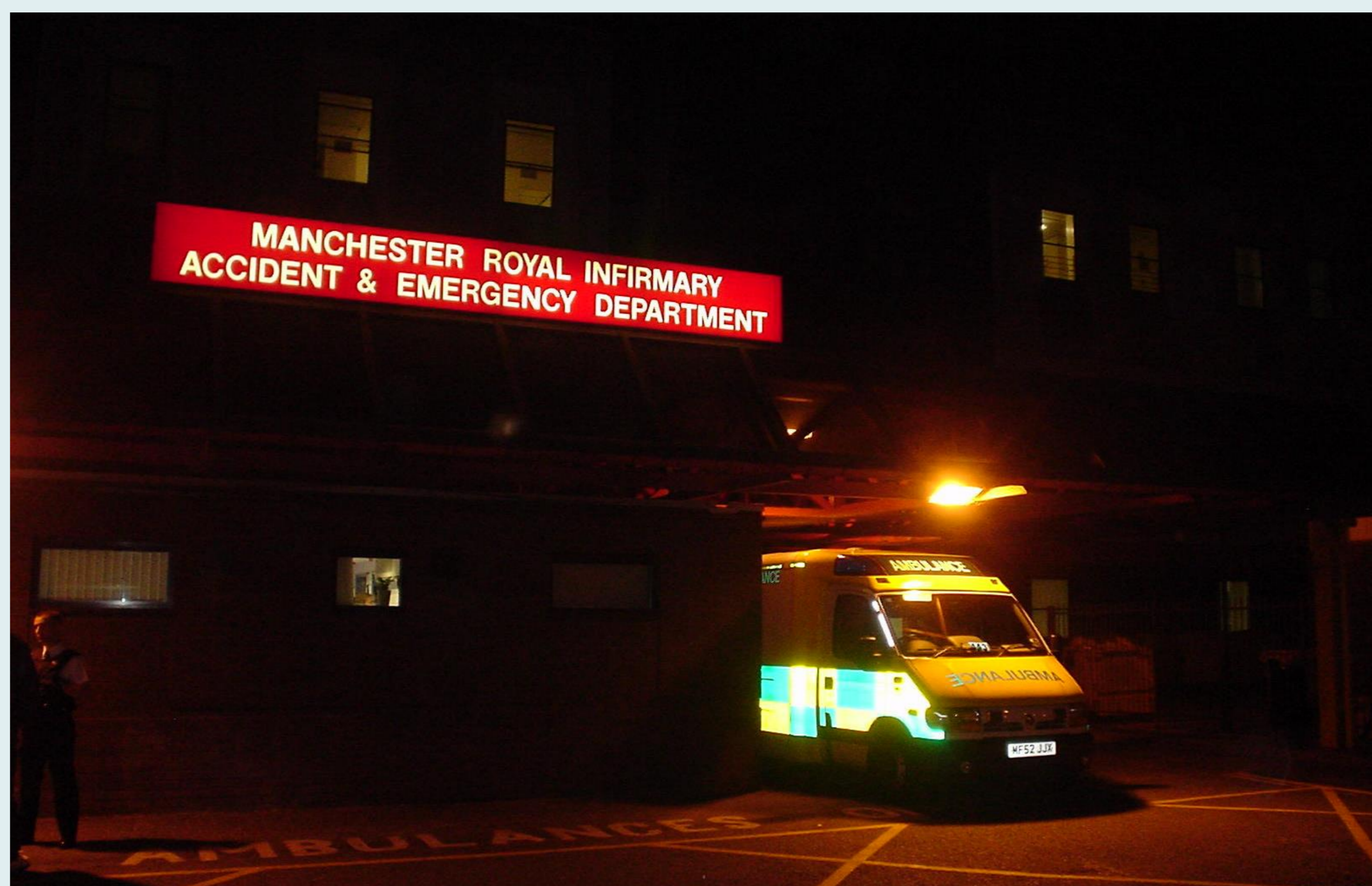


## Clinician or Academic?

I was at a crossroads in my career and needed to find some advice about how I might choose between the options that I had: These were continuing in nursing practice, becoming an advanced nurse practitioner, entering nursing management or considering a career as an academic nurse. The big problem I had was that I knew no academic nurses and didn't even know whether academic careers were possible. I imagined that the academic life was very isolated from practice which concerned me as I like contact with patients. As if heaven sent a flyer for the NIHR Internship arrived in my in box. I applied and much to my surprise I was successful. The journey had begun.

## What I learnt

I learnt that academics were very collaborative, that they talked things through and took some considerable time to make decisions.  
I learnt that research has to take in the views of service users (patients) and that gaining these views takes considerable effort  
I learnt that seeking research funding takes up a lot of academics time  
I learnt that academics are keen to translate their findings into practice



## What I achieved

First of all the pandemic and the unforeseen lock down ensured that I achieved a considerable expertise in using Zoom. At no time during the whole (extended) internship did I meet anyone academic face to face and I have not had the pleasure of visiting an academic department. I have, however, attended departmental, inter-departmental and service user meetings and have met with many academics on a one-to-one basis. Despite (or maybe because of) this enforced physical isolation I was coached through carrying out a large scoping review of the methods used to measure the validity of triage systems. I have also used the results of the review to write the protocol for my next study.

## What I'm proud of

As well as managing to complete the design of my next research study I am particularly proud to have been a voice for the mental health patients that present to Emergency Departments. I have been able to influence the research priorities of the research group to include the interface between emergency and mental health services. I am grateful for the time the seasoned academics gave to the views of an intern



## In the end

I have decided not to decide just yet between a wholly clinical and a wholly academic career. Rather I have taken an opportunity to see if there is a viable fifth way which combines seeing patients, carrying out research and translating research into practice.

I am now Clinical Academic Matron in the Emergency Department at the Manchester Royal Infirmary. This is a secondment and the viability of the role will be reviewed after a year. My time as an NIHR Intern has been invaluable in helping me decide between the options that I had, and has reinforced my wish to continue, in some form or other, both an academic and a clinical career.