



Job placement opens door to rewarding career

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Column: Career Moves

For years, Melissa Turner pictured herself working with children. But after choosing a placement that forced her to stretch her wings, the Communicative Disorders Assistant (CDA) graduate found her true calling, working with adults who have suffered a stroke or brain injury.

"I always thought I'd work with kids but today, my heart is more with adults," says the 27-year-old. "Before my placement at **Bridgepoint Health**, I was terrified of doing a placement in a hospital and working with adults. I learned they have a real willingness to work to where they're getting better."

The placement was part of the CDA program at Durham College in Oshawa. The post-graduate program gives students a firm understanding of physiological and functional speech, language and hearing disorders.

Turner completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Waterloo, with a major in social development studies and minor in sociology. While there, she volunteered in an early-years language class at a children's centre. "I worked primarily with children with autism," Turner says. "I loved it. It was very rewarding."

She also volunteered as a swimming instructor, working with a young boy with hydrocephalus. "When I first went to Waterloo, I was thinking I would study child psychology, but I realized I was more interested in the development process and stages of learning."

After graduating in 2003, Turner spent a year working with Durham Region Social Services before taking Durham College's one-year, three-semester CDA program. Entrance requirements include a two-year college diploma or university degree, with emphasis in communication disorders, linguistics, social sciences or human services curricula.

In addition to her placement at Toronto's **Bridgepoint Health**, an integrated health network for the treatment of complex chronic disease and disability, Turner completed an observation placement at Grandview Children's Centre in Oshawa and a clinical placement at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa.

Upon graduation, Turner landed a full-time position with **Bridgepoint Health**. She works with a trans-disciplinary team that includes speech pathologists and social workers. The team has travelled to Singapore to make a presentation at the 3rd Annual Chronic Disease Management Conference. "We showed how we work as a trans-disciplinary team, which we know is a one-of-a-kind approach."

Turner is currently working on her Master's in Speech Pathology through Nova Southern University in Florida. She also teaches an "improving pronunciation" course to newcomers at George Brown College in Toronto.

She welcomes the opportunity to continue helping people working to regain communication skills. "Chronic diseases are affecting people at younger ages," Turner says, pointing to stroke victims as an example. "If you have a communication impairment, you could almost be locked in your body because you can't speak

