

I love nursing – I have no regrets!



By Emina Hubanic.

I am a medication endorsed, enrolled nurse and endoscopy specialist, working in Day Surgery. I work the majority of my shifts in the endoscopy operating theatre but I also work admitting patients for surgery and getting them ready for and sending them home from hospital. As my best vision measurement in the better eye is 6/24, I decided not to progress to the RN level, as I felt some tasks would have been too difficult due to low vision. Reading and checking labels on tiny drug ampoules - not impossible but difficult to do repeatedly in a day.

There are challenges, but by working with colleagues, the use of larger computer screens and text, my smart phone and occasionally my pocket magnifier, I am able to undertake most tasks as part of a team.



Starting a new job

Being interviewed for a new job or position is probably the most challenging thing to do. I need to be able to convince them of my experience, what I can do, my enthusiasm to learn and work hard and then how I use my functional vision to complete tasks satisfactorily. To get the job, HR and management want all the doctors letters with details of Albinism and vision level, without understanding what I can do with the vision I have – you find yourself again explaining your functional vision.

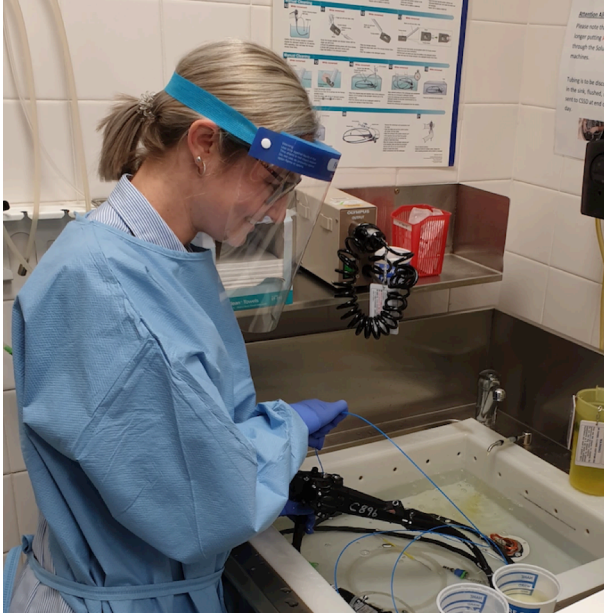


When I first work in a team or there is a new team member that I will be working with regularly, I explain about my vision, how it affects my work and the tasks I need help with. They are usually very supportive and happy to adjust roles, but they do occasionally forget that I cannot see and I have to advocate again, with a resultant – “Oh sorry I forgot”!

Working in Theatre

As I work in endoscopy, there is no open surgery and I don't need to pass small sharp instruments, or count small instruments from a distance with bright lights and not much contrast. The sharp instruments that I do handle I have full control of and can hold them as close up as I need to (while wearing face and eye protection of course).





The greatest issue is probably vision fatigue, especially in long 10 hour shifts. If I have a bad vision day, a colleague will assist with things like minor stitching and paperwork.

I have access to a large screen in theatre with the ability to enlarge font. Following surgery I dismantle, prepare and sterilise equipment, then store it safely. I am often also on call, to finish off the operating and sterilise ultrasound probes and endoscopes from other theatres, overnight and on weekends.

If I need to use a syringe and am having bad vision day, it is difficult to see the measurement increment lines. They are happy to back me up when I ask a workmate to do it, as they understand. Within a team I can avoid doing IV medications as the vials are often very small. I just work through challenges with the people I work with!

Working with patients

I always try to stand with my back to any window or bright light to prevent glare, but don't use any special equipment other than a small 5mm dome magnifier that I keep in my bag. It is handy for filling in forms – especially tick columns and when coloured pages do not have good contrast. Back at the workstation I use a computer with a large screen and I zoom in on text to enter a patient's details.

Working with my employer to find solutions

Travelling to work: When the shifts are during daylight I travel by train, but this is problematic when the shift finishes late or I am on call for a shift at night. Sometimes I need to go in after lengthy day surgery in another theatre in order to sterilise specialist equipment. Generally my employer provides a cabcharge or overnight accommodation

Adjusting hours to cope with vision fatigue: Initially I avoided 10 hour shifts, opting for 8 hours and a shorter day. With a change in hospital I am now doing the longer 10 hour shifts and have a day off, avoiding working for 3 days in a row. While visual fatigue sets in towards the end of the shift, it is good to have a day to completely recover before the next shift. Employers are generally willing to allow you to go part time to take a break if it is needed.



I love being a nurse – it is hard work, but I have no regrets!