



### Summary:

- National Doctor's Day Reflections

Message feedback



**Audience: All staff**



**Read time: 5+ min**



**For: Information**

Dear colleagues,

This week, we pause to recognise and celebrate our doctors at Community and Oral Health (COH), by creating space for their voices to be heard.

As part of National Doctors' Day, we invited some of our doctors to reflect on their careers and share what they would say to their younger selves. Their stories are varied and deeply personal. Some have experienced unexpected paths or detours. Others reflect on moments of self-doubt, resilience, growth and learning to trust the process. Together, they remind us that there is no single 'right' way to build a medical career — and that every journey has value.

There is a simple but powerful message that runs through these reflections: every experience teaches us something, every path matters and sometimes the most important advice — whether you are just starting out or navigating a difficult stretch — is to hang in there.

Across COH, doctors play a pivotal role in our multidisciplinary models of care. Through their expertise, leadership and collaboration, they shape clinical decision-making, support teams and contribute to safe, high-quality care for our patients.

Each brings their own experiences, perspectives and strengths and we are genuinely proud of the many different journeys that have led them to COH.

To all our doctors who work across the length and breadth of COH — Thank you for all that you do and happy National Doctors' Day!

### **Reflection - Dr Kathryn Pugh**

*"I'm one of the rehabilitation physicians in Brighton Rehabilitation Unit and I suspect that I am the oldest. One great regret is that my father died before I graduated. He was a GP on the Redcliffe Peninsula and my inspiration.*

"The best advice that I can give to any new graduate is always trust your gut instinct and don't over think your future plans. Life has a way of turning out totally different from what you expect."



### Reflection - Dr Bill Lukin

"I am the Clinical Director – Community Palliative Care/SPACE and also lead the Comfort Care Bundle for the Frail Service at Metro North Health. I had a late mid-career crisis in that the afterhours burden of working in a busy tertiary emergency department was becoming too much.

"As well, I began to feel the beginnings of burnout with the very heavy clinical load and the constant overwhelming state of emergency medicine with access block and overcrowding. I was lucky to make a connection with a palliative care clinician who invited me to do a sabbatical. I loved it and went on to do a second fellowship and now am in a job I love with no weekends!!

"My advice to my younger self is: What you are doing now may not always be what you are going to do. Don't be afraid to change and trust your instincts. And, there is a whole lot of medicine that happens outside hospitals that is probably more important than what goes on inside."



### Reflection - Dr Alex Chaudhuri

"I am the Acting Director of the Virtual Ward. The challenges I have faced during my career have been excellent opportunities for growth. Difficult diagnostic challenges forced me to think outside the box and question my assumptions.

"Difficult conversations compelled me to take a step back and build emotional regulation. And difficult situations made me realise that they will pass and I will grow through them.

"One piece of advice I would give my younger self is to 'Just ask the question you think needs to be asked!'. Never hesitate. If others judge you as being naive or outspoken, you learn more about them (and the situation)."



## Reflecti



*"I joined COH as a consultant geriatrician in the middle of 2023. Despite working in this role for a few years, I (like many others) still have days where I suffer with imposter syndrome despite the training and experience I have accumulated throughout my years as a doctor."*

*"Looking back on the early days of my career, if I could give myself one piece of advice when I was starting out, it would be to find a more senior colleague to build a mentor-mentee relationship with. Having someone knowledgeable to give an outside perspective and advice can be so helpful in building self-belief."*



## Reflection - Dr Vee Maliyasena

*"I'm a Respiratory and General Physician, working as a Senior Staff Specialist across Virtual Ward and HITH, alongside my private practice. My path to get here hasn't been entirely straightforward."*

*"The biggest challenges for me was moving to Queensland from New South Wales partway through advanced training, where I had to work harder than local trainees to demonstrate my capability in a new health system."*

*"And as a woman of colour in a male-dominated specialty, I often feel I need to work three times as hard as my male counterparts just to be seen and taken seriously. If I could give my younger self one piece of advice, it would be this: Rejection is redirection. When one door closes, another will open (even if it takes time to find it). Keep going anyway."*

## Reflection



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turn up to work unaffected by life regardless of whether the problems are personal or professional.

"So, my advice is when tough times come — reach out, take time to focus on what's most important to you (as a person not just as a clinician) even if it means slowing down or making a lateral career move. I never regretted anytime I have done this and have regretted every time I didn't."



## Reflection - Dr Clair Sullivan

"I am the Clinical Director of Community Diabetes and also Conjoint Professor of Community Diabetes and Digital Health at University of Queensland. I have had a diverse career, including an academic track in digital health.

"This area is new to medicine and so comes with all the chaos and uncertainty of a new discipline. Lots of fun though! One piece of advice I would give my younger self is keep going! And remember there is no failure, just learning opportunities."



## Reflection - Dr Pallavi Bansal

"I am the Clinical Director Rehabilitation Medicine. Medicine evolves constantly — and so does life. One of the most persistent personal challenges I've faced is the familiar tug-of-war between

motherhood and career. As a mum, guilt seems to be a constant companion, especially when pursuing professional growth. After completing my FAFRM, my mind was already racing toward the next academic pursuit, but in fear of being 'thrown out of the house,' — I pressed pause.

"Another significant challenge was relocating far from home to a completely different culture and healthcare system and choosing the right speciality. Despite the distance and the initial uncertainty, the shared work ethos and the universal language of humanity made me fall in love with this country almost immediately.

"That transition taught me adaptability, humility and the value of stepping into the unknown. I have found my niche in rehabilitation medicine and developed passion for education, working to expand learning opportunities and help make COH a supportive place for junior doctors and trainees.

"If I could speak to the young doctor I once was, I'd tell her this: There is no rush. Be persistent. Trust the process. Setbacks aren't signs of failure — they're the experiences that make you more resilient and stronger than you ever imagined. Be kind to yourself and the community you thrive in."



### Reflection - Dr Kylie Stephan

"I am the Deputy Director of Medical Services and the GP for COH's Residential Aged Care Facility patients. My path into medicine, and through it, has not been linear.

"A strong interest in communication, community and the breadth of medicine, together with a desire to start a family early in my career, made general practice an obvious first choice for me. I was accepted into GP training as an intern and left the hospital system after the birth of my first child at the end of my JHO year.

"General practice was a natural fit for me, providing the flexibility to build both my family and my career in parallel and it remains how I identify myself within medicine. What prompted a move into medical administration training, was a desire to apply my clinical experience in a broader context. Although this has now become my primary role, I continue to see myself first and foremost as a clinician.

"A period of significant family hardship early in my career required me to step into the unexpected role of sole breadwinner for my young family. My non-medical husband took on the role of primary carer, and this experience challenged our earlier expectations of how our family dynamic might look. Over time, we have continued to adapt and share these roles as our careers and family needs have evolved — although with teenagers at home, I am currently quite happy for him to lean into that role a little more than me!

"The 3 things I would tell my junior doctor self:

1. Trust your decision to build the family you want and let your career evolve around it.

2. Your path won't look like everyone else's and that's fine.

3. Back yourself and take all the side quests; they'll prove valuable in ways you don't expect."



**Glynis Schultz**  
**Executive Director**

**Metro North Health**



We uphold our commitment to health equity through our Values in Action  
Respect | Integrity | Compassion | High Performance | Teamwork



Metro North Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Land upon which we live, work and walk, and pay our respects to Elders both past and present.

**Metro North Health's vision**

Creating healthier futures together—where innovation and research meets compassionate care and community voices shape our services.



**Queensland  
Government**

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