



the royal victorian  
eye and ear  
hospital

# Sight + Sound

NEWS | WINTER 2021



Mother and daughter duo have pterygium surgery on the same day

## Like Mother, Like Daughter

In April, mother and daughter, Mary and Danielle were admitted to day surgery for the same procedure, on the same day, within an hour of each other.

Both patients had an eye condition called pterygium, a growth that covers the white part of the eye over the cornea. It is common in people who live in climates with high sun exposure or people who work outdoors.

“I have had a pterygium in each eye for what seems like forever. I first noticed them in my early 20’s. I would spend many hours on the beach, riding a sea-doo jet-ski and teaching swimming outdoors, all with no sunglasses or hat... silly! My eyes were often red, itchy and dry. I did rub them a lot,” Danielle explained.

Danielle is one of Mary’s three children who have all experienced a pterygium in one or both of their eyes at some point in their life. Danielle was the first in the family to receive surgery to remove her pterygium, first her right eye in 2020 before booking in her left eye for April 2021.

Mary first noticed a pterygium growing in her right eye five years ago, and knew what it was after discussing the condition with her children.

“It was painless, but I would often have people commenting on it and asking me what it was,” Mary explained.

As Mary’s pterygium grew more rapidly, she began to experience some discomfort.

“I started to feel like I had something in my eye all the time.”

Mary is also no stranger to the Eye and Ear after a fall onto a Yucca plant. A leaf pierced her eardrum leaving her with severe hearing loss. As a result, Mary received a cochlear implant in 2016 which has drastically improved her hearing.

It was an remarkable coincidence that Mary and Danielle’s surgery fell on the same day.

“I was on a wait list and they originally had availability on 6 April, but this is my birthday and I wasn’t interested in having surgery that day! So they offered me another date – turns out it was the same day as Danielle’s surgery,” Mary said.

“My first response was ‘how is this going to work,’ I basically went into autopilot and organised my husband to drop me in at 7am and on his way back to the hospital he would drop mum off for her surgery. My daughter then picked Mum up after her surgery. Over the next 10 days we would chat on the phone comparing war wounds and how we were feeling,” Danielle explained.

Both patients have recovered well and are enjoying life after their pterygiums.

The best way to prevent a pterygium is to always wear UV-protecting sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat when exposed to sunlight.



## CEO Welcome

Welcome to the Winter issue of Sight+Sound. Much has been happening at the hospital since the last edition. I recently had the opportunity to catch up with many of our volunteers as part of National Volunteers Week. It was lovely to see so many of their smiling faces again after the pandemic related hiatus.

The hospital's broader response to COVID-19 continues to evolve as our approach is further refined by recent experience. Know that the safety of our patients, visitors and staff is always at the forefront of our planning.

Of course, even with the ongoing COVID-19 challenges, life at the hospital goes on. Recently we celebrated the outstanding services of our nurses as part of International Nurses Day. I am sure anyone who has been to our hospital would be aware of the tremendous contribution our nurses make.

Your interest in our hospital means so much. I hope you enjoy this edition of Sight + Sound where we meet mother and daughter Mary and Danielle who were admitted into our day surgery on the same day to receive the same procedure. I am reliably informed that is a first for the Eye and Ear!

We also hear from:

- Board Chair, Dr Sherene Devanesen
- Coral Reid, volunteer for over 12 years

Thank you for your continued support of the Eye and Ear and I hope you enjoy this edition.

Best wishes,

Brendon Gardner

Nurses holding their International Nurses Day cookies



## Translated patient information

Recently, we received a grant from the Eirene Lucas Foundation to help with translating patient information related to Balance and General Audiology and Speech Pathology.

The grant supported the translation of eight patient information brochures into our four most common patient languages (Turkish, Greek, Simplified Chinese and Arabic).

The patient information translated included:

- Vestibular Migraine
- Hearing and Communication Strategies
- Hearing Aids
- Tinnitus
- Silent Reflux
- Dysphonia (voice disorder)
- Preventing Falls at home
- Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)

As a specialist hospital that services all of Victoria it is so important that our information is as accessible as possible to our community.

**Thank you to the Eirene Lucas Foundation for helping us better serve more patients. If you or a loved one need language support during your visit to the Eye and Ear, you can book an interpreter by calling 03 9929 8234.**



## Farewell Coral

Retiring from volunteer duties is a difficult decision for many of our volunteers. Recently, for personal reasons, Coral Reid, who has volunteered with us for 12 years, decided to retire. Anyone who came into contact with Coral at the hospital will understand how much she will be missed. Coral reflected on her time at the Eye and Ear and her passion for providing the best patient experience possible.

It all began with Coral attending her local Volunteer Expo back in 2009.

“I credit my husband with the idea, as it was him who saw the poster for the Boroondara Volunteer Expo. This is where I first heard about the Eye and Ear’s new volunteer program. I was attracted to the program because it was not an administrative role, but one where I could interact with the patients.”



National Volunteer Week celebrations 2021

Coral helped shape the concierge welcome role to what it is today and has been instrumental in recruiting, training and mentoring fellow volunteers over the years. Coral has held many and varied roles, including becoming a member of our Consumer Advisory Committee, giving her the opportunity to be a voice for the patient, one of her true passions.

“The overwhelming feeling is one of fulfilment and satisfaction in my relationship with the patients, first and foremost. That’s what we are all here for, without the patients none of us have a place,” Coral explained.

Due to COVID-19 our onsite volunteer program was put on hold, however the team stayed connected via virtual meetings and projects that could be conducted remotely.



Volunteer, Coral Reid, hangs up her red vest after 12 years of service

“I feel so grateful that the Eye and Ear came into my life. It has been a privilege, a wonderful experience, beyond anything I’d thought possible after retirement, it has been most fulfilling,” Coral said.

When asked to share a final message with the community Coral said,

**“The Eye and Ear is a special place. I would like the wider community to understand how important The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital is to us all. Providing world class care, and preserving and improving the quality of so many of our lives every day.”**

We thank Coral for her unwavering dedication to the Eye and Ear – she will be missed.

Interested in volunteering?  
Please contact Betty Tellis on 03 9929 8658  
or on [Betty.Tellis@eyeandear.org.au](mailto:Betty.Tellis@eyeandear.org.au)

## Meet Dr Sherene Devanesen

Dr Sherene Devanesen has worked in health service management and medical administration for over 30 years, recently retiring from her role as Chief Executive Officer of Yooralla after seven years of service. Dr Devanesen's passion for providing exceptional patient care to our community led her to the role of Board Chair of The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital in April 2015.

Sherene's experience has provided her with a passion for consumer consultation and engagement and in achieving quality outcomes for human and community services.

Dr Devanesen is a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Medical Administrators, a Fellow of the Australasian College of Health Service Management, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Managers and Leaders, a Fellow of the Hong Kong College of Community Medicine and a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. She is also a past member of the Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority Advisory Board and has recently been appointed to the Northern Territory Health Governance and Assurance Committee.

**“It is incredibly rewarding to be able to contribute to the exceptional work that is done at the Eye and Ear. Outstanding patient care is at the forefront of everything we do, which is why I am committed to leading our very accomplished Board. Donors are so important to our hospital. The many projects they support help to make the hospital the world leader it is today.”**



Interview with Board Chair, Dr Sherene Devanesen

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