



PRESIDENT ELECT *Professor Nitin Verma AM* 13 August 2020

Nitin Verma:

Hello, my name is Nitin Verma and I'm the President-Elect of RANZCO. I come to you from the lands of the Muwinina people. I pay my respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging. I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional owners, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia, on whose land members of our college live and work. In recognition that we are a binational college, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Rangatiratanga of Māori as Tangata Whenua and Treaty of Waitangi partners in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Thank you for joining me for this short video. I'm also joined by my better half, Anu.

Anu Verma:

Hi, there. I'm Anu Verma. I am Nitin's wife. I'm an engineer, and I've been in academics and teaching for most of my life, and I recently retired. Nitin, please tell us, how would you best describe yourself?

Nitin Verma:

Well, I think the best way to start is from the beginning. I'm originally from India, where I was born and studied and trained, and also then moved on to study in Europe, in Germany. I've lived in different parts of the world, some very advanced countries and some not so fortunate. I've seen healthcare in different parts of the world, learned a lot from them, learned to do a lot with less, and then for the past few decades, have been living in Australia. I worked with the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people during my stint in Darwin, and now live in Tasmania, where I am attached to the university, and also the public hospital and run a practise.

During my time in different parts of the world, I've seen that there is a lot of inequality, but as the world is becoming smaller, communication is getting better. I think I've found that it's become easier to transfer our skill, transfer our knowledge to places that require it. We are fortunate, living in Australia and New Zealand, that we are able to do this.

This whole thing sits on the shoulders of eye care because we people are trusted, and we always find opportunities to do more than just the eye care, by improving the lot of a person, by moving them up the socioeconomic ladder,

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by improving their eyesight, I think we have the capacity to do a lot, and I think that's what I found very, very useful. The ability to transfer all this, that one knows, to simplify it, to teach somebody else, and make themselves efficient, I think ophthalmologists are blessed because they can do these things.

When I do have time, I do like to go out for a sail. I like to turn wood. But basically, I'm always curious about everything, and I'm willing to try my hand on different things. I also happen to be a grandfather, and really enjoy my time with the grandchildren and the family.

Anu Verma:

Please tell us, what is an ophthalmologist?

Nitin Verma:

An ophthalmologist is a highly specialised, medically trained doctor, who has trained in the diagnosis and management of eye conditions. An ophthalmologist is a person who is adept at using surgical methods, lasers, and medical treatment for eye conditions. But above all, an ophthalmologist is somebody who is capable of treating the whole patient, rather than a pair of eyes.

The journey of a patient with an eye problem is not straightforward because they are often referred to us by general practitioners, by other colleagues, by optometrists, and when they do come to us, our team includes technicians, nurses, orthoptists, and so on. So the patient actually has a long way to go. The ophthalmologist orchestrates the whole process, making sure that at the end of it, the best possible outcomes are achieved for the patient.

Now, ophthalmologists are not only doctors, but they are also managers, they're also teachers, they're administrators, they're patient advocates, and researchers, and they work in different settings. They work in private practises. They work in public hospitals. They work in private hospitals. They work as administrators and look after eye departments in universities and general hospitals all across Australia and New Zealand.

Anu Verma:

What does the college and its presidency mean to you?

Nitin Verma:

In answering this question, I must start by acknowledging the work of many of the past presidents, but most specifically the current president, Associate Professor Heather Mack. I've worked with her for many years. In fact, I've been with the college for many years in some role or another, either at the state level or at the federal level, in the council, as part of committees, and also on the board, and I've worked with Heather for a very long time in her various roles.

I've always been inspired by her attention to detail, her collegiality, the amount of work she puts in, in making sure that everything runs properly. I don't think I've met anybody who has been so meticulous, and I really have a lot to learn from her. She's done so much for the standards of governance and making sure processes are robust, processes are transparent, and processes are fair. She's really put the college in a very, very good position, and I think this is going to serve us in good stead for a very long time.

But I think, while the college has got a major role in education, but it also looks after the patient. It looks after the patient outcomes. It looks after our place in the healthcare system across Australia and New Zealand. And we are a college that looks after our members. It looks at the interest of our members. We help each other. We teach each other, we learn from each other, and we make sure that we move forward together.

We also have a very major role, since we recognise the diversity in the land that we live in, both in New Zealand and Australia. We need to look at the

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community. We need to look at their wellbeing, and we need to also advocate for them at every level. We need to make sure that education is important, that education is current, and that all healthcare professionals, especially eye health professionals, in this country, whether they are optometrists, whether they're general practitioners, whether they are other specialists, are able to access the new things, or access the research and access the things that allow ophthalmology and eye care to move forward. That is a responsibility of the college, also.

I'd say that we recognise the diversity that exists in these countries, in our countries, in Australia and New Zealand, and also how this contributes so positively to the best outcomes, especially around equity for first nations people. One of the initiatives that's very dear to me is Closing the Gap.

Anu Verma:

What is Closing the Gap? Why is it a priority?

Nitin Verma:

Well, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists is one of the original endorsers of the roadmap for Closing the Gap for vision, and its annual update is launched at RANZCO Congress each year. Soon, we'll also be launching our Māori action plan. New Zealand is often seen as the exemplar of equality, but there's more to be done to ensure true equity of access for Māori and Pacifica. I hope that you'll join me on this journey, as well as be part of many of the other initiatives that we'll be embarking on over the next few years.