

HESTA Australian Nursing Awards
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Tasmanian nurse in running for national award

A young nurse dedicated to providing holistic care to patients facing life threatening illness has been named a finalist in the 2012 HESTA Australian Nursing Awards.

Shani Vansant from the neurosurgery unit at Royal Hobart Hospital is one of five nursing professionals in the running to be named Graduate Nurse of the Year.

Ms Vansant excelled in the demanding neurosurgery environment, caring for patients with critical conditions including traumatic brain injuries, tumours and aneurysms. Her calm under pressure was demonstrated on her third shift, when she performed CPR on a patient who had just experienced a cardiac arrest.

Ms Vansant says every patient's journey is unique and it is important to provide not only physical, but emotional, social and spiritual care to that patient and their family.

"We care for patients and their families every day who are going through terrible times, and as nurses we have the opportunity make this time a little less difficult," Ms Vansant said.

"I try to establish real and meaningful connections with all those involved so I can better identify, and respond to, their specific needs."

When Ms Vansant was caring for a mother of two who was not responding to treatment, she tried to learn as much as she could about the woman and her family in order to support their journey.

"That experience taught me the importance of recognising what means the most to patients and their family. I encouraged them to bring in pets and photos, and share stories, all of which led to a greater feeling of support and helped them open up about their worries and fears," Ms Vansant said.

In an environment where patients may exhibit confusion, agitation and aggression, Ms Vansant is known for her calm professionalism. She impressed colleagues with her management of a patient with Guillain-Barre syndrome who suffered temporarily paralysis. The patient was a tourist who did not speak English, and Ms Vansant developed cue cards to help him communicate.

Working towards a Graduate Certificate in Neurosurgical Nursing, Ms Vansant hopes to continue her education in the field of critical care with the goal of playing an educator role in the future.

"Acute care deals with more than just the physical care of the patient. The emotional wellbeing and the wellbeing of the patient's family play a critical role in patient's journey, and hopefully, recovery. I hope one day I can help teach students and graduates in this setting."

Ms Vansant will travel to Melbourne for the HESTA Australian Nursing Awards gala dinner on 10 May. The winner of the Graduate Nurse of the Year award will receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant.

The prize money is provided by ME Bank, a supporter of the awards since 2008.

HESTA is one of Australia's largest superannuation funds with more than 730,000 members. It is chosen by more people working in health and community services than any other fund.

Visit hestaawards.com to book tickets for the event or learn more about the awards.

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