

# PEARLS FROM AN EXPERIENCED HAND



## DISPENSER DETAILS

**Name:** Lyn Simeon  
**Position:** Practice manager  
**Location:** Teachers Health Centre, Parramatta, NSW.  
**Years in industry:** 53

### 1. What attracted you to optical dispensing?

Leaving school after year 10 and not feeling a career in the bank was for me, I applied for a traineeship with OPSM and completed my Cert IV in Optical Dispensing. Working in numerous Sydney stores and climbing the ladder to manager, I was eventually responsible for employing and training new staff obtaining their optical dispensing licenses and would train them in cutting and fitting in-store. I also became the lens specialist for the region, supporting those with difficult prescriptions.

My time at OPSM spanned 35 years but I was interested in new opportunities, so jumped ship with our optometrist who opened her own business. This was quite a change from corporate to private, and I stayed as manager for seven years, including some casual work at Specsavers Blacktown. After flirting with other opportunities, suddenly a job came up at Teachers Eyecare Parramatta, and now I have worked as the center manager of eyecare, dental, and membership for 11 years.

### 2. What are your career highlights?

Achieving my dispenser's licence stands out, but helping train new staff was an ongoing highlight. Another has been winning numerous excellence in customer service awards whilst manager of OPSM Wetherill Park and as manager at Teachers Health Centre Parramatta. It showed how I managed staff to make customer service the most important part of business, along with professionalism, knowledge, skills and friendliness. Contacting The Children's Hospital at Westmead and setting up the supply of free spectacles for children whose parents are unable to afford them, and given support from Teachers Health to do this, was memorable. An 8-year-old saying, "Thank you for giving me glasses that my dad could not afford", brought a tear to my eye.

### 3. What are your strengths as an optical dispenser?

My experience, my love of training and my customer relationships. Return visits are the way to keep and build your business in a competitive market. To stand out you need good customer skills, training, knowledge and presentation. I come from a teaching family and feel I've achieved it in my own field. Nothing excites me more than a new employee with no experience becoming an amazing optical dispenser that our patients and customers will ask for.

### 4. What advice would you give to yourself at the beginning of your career?

You should complete a Cert IV in Optical Dispensing training.

### 5. What are the key opportunities and challenges facing optical dispensing?

In an ever-growing industry, you need something different and better than your competitors. Since deregulation, there are many unskilled people with no understanding of optics.

To maintain a level of education, like ODA is offering, is the only way you can offer the level of service and understanding patients deserve. Not only their sight, but their appearance is in your hands. Correct fitting and adjustment of their frames, correct lenses for their prescription, quality of products and, of course, the trusting relationships you build. Ongoing education through online courses or in-store training is essential.

### 6. Why did you become a member of ODA?

I saw an opportunity to continue learning and hear new ideas from colleagues from different states and practices. Even though I've spent my whole life in optics, ODA has taught me many new things. I have also built some wonderful relationships, with the pinnacle being the recent Fijian outreach program. I have a passion to give back to communities and have been a weekend respite foster carer for nine years now.

Giving the gift of sight to those less fortunate than us is mind-blowing. The smiles on children's faces in Fiji and the elderly with sight problems was unforgettable. The group of 10 dispensers and two optometrists were put to the challenge of living together in humble accommodation and working long days starting

at 6.30am and finishing at 8-9pm, arriving back after two- to three-hour drives from the rural areas we visited. ODA left its footprint in all the schools we visited, screening students, teachers and elderly villagers and supplying free glasses.

### 7. What would you say to others thinking of joining ODA?

I have encouraged my junior optical dispenser and senior casual optical dispenser to join and would encourage the same for everyone else. It has a great support program and resources.

You can liaise with others in the industry and, perhaps like me, form great friendships. Education has played a big part in my life and I'm forever encouraging people to continue learning, no matter how long they've been in the industry. ODA will ensure you get all the up-to-date information and training. ■

BELOW: Lyn Simeon says customer service is the most important aspect of optical dispensing, along with professionalism, knowledge, skills and friendliness.

