

Sarah Christensen

LIVED EXPERIENCE: Multiple Chronic Illnesses



Sarah is an experienced healthcare consumer with an understanding of both the paediatric and adult healthcare systems, since developing a range of chronic illnesses beginning when she was 12 years old. Sarah's passion to improve patient outcomes and experiences in healthcare has been further enhanced by her work and studies as an enrolled nurse, as the youngest EN graduate from TAFE Queensland (as of July 2020). Due to her ill health, Sarah grappled with barriers to workforce participation as well as further studies, and sought a path where she could bring value to healthcare from her lived experience in a flexible way.

Sarah's experiences with chronic illness are across specialties, with diagnoses taking her from gastroenterologists to internal medicine specialists, gynaecologists, cardiologists, psychologists, pain management specialists and many more - giving her a well rounded view of the health system, and how multidisciplinary teams do - or do not - work well together. In terms of pursuing change, Sarah is passionate about alleviating the inequities and challenges faced by young people and women when accessing care in particular. Beyond the health system, Sarah wishes to use her experiences to engage with other sectors and systems to increase their accessibility, responsiveness and understanding of chronic illnesses.

KEY INFORMATION

Place of Birth: Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Current location: Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Age: 19 years old

Language/s: English only

LGBTQIA+: Yes

NDIS Participant: No

Diagnoses: Facet Joint Arthropathy, Disc Desiccation, Crohn's Disease, Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome, Fibromyalgia, Vestibular Migraines

Healthcare Access: Primary Health Care, Allied Health, Mental Health, Secondary and Tertiary care

ACHIEVEMENTS AND EXPERIENCE:

- Successful in gaining a position in the competitive Perioperative NOVICE Program 2020 (scrub/scout, anaesthetics, PACU)
- Youngest Diploma of Nursing Graduate for TAFE Queensland Brisbane (as of July 2020)
- Enrolled in Graduate Program with Australian College of Nursing (ACN) - Principles of Emergency Care for Enrolled/Division 2 Nursing
- Contributor in Crowdsourcing Forums (contributing to various chronic illness databases)