

07 March 2017

Liverpool Hospital Surgeon paves the way for International Women's Day

Since 1998 Dr Valerie Malka has helped save many lives and also broken down barriers for women in the process by achieving a number of great things in medicine and surgery.

Speaking ahead of International Women's Day on 8 March, the Liverpool Hospital trauma and general emergency surgeon as well as humanitarian worker, said she was always destined for this path.

"I watched MASH episodes as an eight year old and knew I wanted to save the world as a trauma surgeon. I am very fortunate to have the opportunity each day to really make a difference to someone's life," Dr Malka said.

"It can be the best job in the world and I cannot imagine anything else being as interesting, challenging and rewarding as some of the situations I have been in," she said.

With more than 19 years' medical experience, supporting the Red Cross in 2004 when the tsunami first struck the coasts of Aceh, Indonesia and helping thousands injured when a powerful earthquake struck the Indonesian island of Java in 2006, Dr Malka is always ready for the next emergency and challenge.

"The patients I treat are severely injured and time critical decisions with sometimes very limited information are an everyday occurrence for me. Sometimes a few minutes can literally be the difference between life and death. That's a lot of pressure for anyone but something I wouldn't change for the world," she said.

Working as a trauma doctor can be an exciting career choice, but Dr Malka advised those willing to follow in her footsteps to choose carefully.

"You must literally be in love with your job or it's not possible to do this at this level. It's a hard road, the training, the sacrifices, the hours, the responsibilities, it's not for everyone and it's certainly not for every woman."

"Because traumas and surgical emergencies can happen at all hours of the day and all days of the year, you need to be prepared to work around the clock," she said.

A typical day for Dr Malka will see her managing anything from car crash victims, falls from buildings, ladders and roofs, to stabbings and gunshot wounds, to ruptured appendixes or perforated ulcers.

Despite the pressure and stress, Dr Malka said her experiences have opened a lot of doors and great opportunities including public speaking and freelance writing.

"I have worked with some amazing people and am constantly inspired by the determination, ingenuity, commitment and resourcefulness of the people with whom I've worked with," said Dr

Malka.

"I live by Gandhi's saying that you should be the difference you want to see in the world."

For more information visit <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/> or use the official IWD hash tag on social media **#BeBoldForChange** to join the conversation.

Photo opportunity:

What: A delicious spread, pop up photo booth and meet and greet will be on offer to attendees who will hear from South Western Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive Amanda Larkin, Liverpool Hospital's General Manager Robynne Cooke, Liverpool Hospital trauma surgeon Dr Valerie Malka and former Western Sydney Wanderers player Catherine Cannuli about the contributions women make to our community on a daily basis.

When: Wednesday, March 8, 10:30am at Liverpool Hospital Anzac courtyard with weather permitting otherwise Thomas and Rachel Moore Education Centre.