



Women
in Business



Hanya Oversby, Director
Health Business Network
interviews Dr Raelia
Lew – Women's Health
Melbourne.

Dr Raelia Lew is the director of Women's Health Melbourne in Malvern, Fitzroy and has a new practice location in Caulfield, North Victoria. Raelia is a Reproductive Endocrinologist, Gynaecologist and comprehensive Fertility specialist working with Melbourne IVF. She holds a FRANZCOG, a Master degree in Reproductive Medicine, a RANZCOG CREI subspecialty qualification, a clinical academic appointment at the Melbourne University Medical School and a PhD in Reproductive Genetics. It has been my pleasure to work with Raelia in strategic business planning and implementation for her growing private practice. As a woman in business, it has been very exciting to work with Raelia, a highly qualified and driven professional, whose goal is to achieve the very best in the clinical outcomes for her patients and also in her business achievements.

As a business woman in the medical specialist field, I'm sure that this has come with its' own unique challenges. Raelia, can you tell me about your journey from the decision to study medicine to starting and growing your private practice, Women's Health Melbourne?

Hanya, I started studying medicine when I was a teenager. I was only 18 and I thought it was a good idea. I had 6 years to decide which direction to go in and it was a field where I could help people and express myself scientifically. I always felt that it was really exciting to gain knowledge in the area of human anatomy, biochemistry and physiology and to apply that clinically to help my patients.

I very quickly decided I wanted to do fertility medicine and IVF in particular, and from very early stages of my career I strove to go in that direction. So, medically speaking, starting my practice was a natural end point. I had absolutely no training whatsoever in business management or how to run a small business or how the small business side of things might fit into

the medical paradigm, so I really learnt that on my feet starting my practice.

To some degree I 'winged it'.

Initially where did you seek knowledge on the business of running a medical practice? Did 'winging it' work well for you?

It did, actually, initially, in that it allowed me to step outside of any expectations and ask myself what did I want from my business. I generated my business in the way that I wanted it to, but certainly in terms of 'reinventing the wheel' and finding efficiencies I had a lot to learn and when you're running a practice that's steadily getting busier and busier you really do find that you reach a point where you're no longer coping with that strategy, of lack thereof!

What have been some of the key advantages that came from working with a business consultant?

It allows me to focus on what I'm best at, which is my clinical role and allows me time to do things that I'm interested in in terms of exploring

areas outside of medicine. It can become all-consuming when you have to run your business, work your fulltime job, maintain your relationship and your family and commitments to things outside of work all the while trying to achieve the ever elusive 'balance'. So firstly, in terms of optimising my business strategy and making my business as effective as it possibly can be, I recognised that I did need help and assistance and guidance. But also, to free me from the day to day tasks that do become very onerous in addition to my clinical role, I've found your help extremely useful and rewarding! So, thank you!

It's been my pleasure!

Through the experiences of starting a new private practice, what were the keys challenges that you faced from a business and personal perspective and what strategies helped you through this?

'Challenges', I suppose, is another word for 'opportunities' and in starting my practice my goals were to create a very different environment where patients felt very well cared for, where

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I could express my personality through my work and create a very boutique practice setting, which is quite different to what I'd experienced prior to going into private practice, working in the public hospital sector.

In terms of challenges, as a practice grows, what can start very organically has to become more systematised and one of my challenges was developing systems in order to allow my practice to grow and not hit a 'ceiling'. These systems were crucial in assisting me to be more organised and more effective and more efficient in my work and be able to maintain my goals of having the ultimate in patient care, whilst my practice grows in volume. Also, as my practice has grown I've had to consider taking on more staff and to create a work culture and a group culture that is compatible with our aspirations and the feel of our practice – to keep it a warm and happy place to work, but at the same time being effective and giving patients the best experience possible.

Which leads well into the question of leadership...

As a new business owner, you would have noticed that there was a need to take on a leadership role. What was this journey like?

I've enjoyed it, I think it's a natural evolution for me. I've always sought to excel in each area of my life as best I can and I've found it enjoyable to be able to create my own business, my own way and to be able to work in that environment, so that I get a lot of job satisfaction.

In terms of leadership roles, I've had other leadership roles in my professional sphere, but taking that on in business adds a new dimension for me and it's another way to extend myself as well and to learn new things, which is something I always like to do. So, I've relished it, really.

Having to employ a new and growing team for Women's Health Melbourne is a big step for a new business owner. What do you feel have been the triumphs and challenges in this process?

I never really appreciated how much effort and momentum it takes to find compatible staff and grow relationships to grow my business and I'm humbled by the experience! I think that the challenges are to find staff that embrace the culture and engage in and feel some ownership of their relationships with patients and their role within the business. Something I'm trying very hard in my business to engender, is a culture of workplace satisfaction - where my staff enjoy their roles and have room and scope to grow in them, which will hopefully lead to a happy workplace into the future.

What is your vision moving forward as a practice?

As my practice evolves, I feel my vision will also evolve. My vision now for my practice is to create an environment where I can work effectively and help as many patients as I can to achieve happy and healthy families, to be that in pre-conception health promotion, via strategies such as egg freezing or through using fertility treatment strategies that are right for each individual.

I realise that moving forward with these goals, one woman can't do it all. I would love to bring together a group of clinicians, allied health practitioners, support staff, and nurses working together under one umbrella to deliver the very best care to my patients.

As a woman in business, what do you find you stand for and how is this reflected in your brand?

Can you tell me about more about this?

When I started to develop my brand, I wanted it to reflect my personality. I thought to myself, "If I was going to seek help from a doctor in this situation, what would I want in terms of the care that I were to receive?" and that's really what I want my brand to engender – that women, men and families receive the kind of care that they consider to be the absolute 'gold standard'.

I want my practice to reflect my values of patient confidentiality, creating a boutique practice setting where patients feel comfortable, giving my patients the certainty that they have enough time spent

with them to truly understand their problems and to find solutions that are tailored to their needs.


For me to be able to this, I wanted my practice to work effectively, to deliver clinical excellence with flair.

What is the best thing about being the Director and owner of Women's Health Melbourne?

Well, I suppose I don't answer to anybody at the moment in terms of the direction of my practice, and that's a good thing. But that means I also shoulder a lot of the responsibility. A lot of situations have double edges to them, but so far, I've really enjoyed the road.

If you were to have the opportunity to speak to Dr Raelia Lew recent graduate – what advice would you give yourself?

I would probably be very enthusiastic and encourage myself to follow the dream and to choose the area of medicine that I was most passionate about (which is what I've done), because there are highs and lows in every profession. It's really the love

of your work and the satisfaction you gain from helping people in a given field, that at the end of the day when you're tired and worn out and feeling a bit down in the dumps, which happens to us all on occasion, really keeps you going and gets you through those hurdles of exams, difficult times, night shifts and conflicts and gets you through to the light at the end of the tunnel. 

With an established reputation within the medical industry, Hanya is considered an expert in medical specialist business consulting. hanyaoversby.com.au

Fertility & Gynaecology | Women's Health Melbourne

Women's Health Melbourne is a fertility clinic offering specialist women's care. We offer IVF solutions, egg freezing and a number of other fertility services. womenshealthmelbourne.com.au