

# Meet the next generation of Timorese Ophthalmologists



**Dr Bernadete Pereira**

*Senior Ophthalmology Registrar  
National Eye Centre, Dili, Timor-Leste*

Dr Bernadete Pereira, is originally from Liquica, Timor-Leste. After travelling to Portugal for six months and North Ireland for one month in 2002 she applied for a scholarship to study in Cuba.

Her successful application saw her study medicine in Cuba for the next 6 years from 2003 to 2009.

After completing her medicine degree Dr Pereira worked in Liquica as a General Practitioner for six months.

"It was the first time working as a doctor so it was very fascinating," she said. "In six months' time I received a letter from Foreign Affairs to come to the main hospital. We were the first graduates from Cuba and they placed us all in small villages where I worked initially in general surgery which I enjoyed very much, for three months.

I like surgery, but we changed departments every three months, finishing with paediatric, which I did for another six months."

In 2012 Dr Pereira decided to focus on ophthalmology.

"My boss was an ophthalmologist and every time he did cataract surgery I came in to watch. I thought it was different because I need to use my hand, my mind and my eyes. From that time I thought 'Okay maybe I will go for eye surgery.'"

Dr Pereira completed her Post-Graduate Diploma of Ophthalmology in 2015.



**Dr Julia Magno**

*Senior Ophthalmology Registrar  
National Eye Centre, Dili, Timor-Leste*

Dr Julia Magno, studied medicine in Indonesia, finishing in 2007 and worked in the Suai district for three years before moving to Dili.

"Since I was a child, since elementary school I wanted to be a doctor," she said.

Dr Magno was offered an opportunity to do her Master's degree in Indonesia having worked for 3 years in internal medicine. However, with three small children she decided to decline the offer and stay in Dili.

"When I knew the eye clinic was offering Diplomas I asked to do my clinical attachment here for a few months," Dr Magno said. "During the 18 month Diploma we went to Nepal for three months to learn small incision cataract surgery."

Dr Magno passed her Post Graduate Diploma in Ophthalmology in 2015. She said she now has the confidence to perform cataract surgery independently.

Last year Dr Magno went to Hobart in May for two weeks for clinical observation at the Hobart Eye Surgeons and Royal Hobart Hospital.

"It's very different, much more advanced," Dr Magno said of surgery in Australia.

"When I was there I learnt how to correct refractive error. It was good to see how the staff work together and the way they talk to patients. They treat them like a friend."



**Dr Susani Sarmento**

*Post Graduate Diploma of  
Ophthalmology Trainee*

Dr Susani Sarmento, won a scholarship to study medicine in Cuba. She finished her four year degree in 2012 and worked as a GP in Manatuto soon afterwards.

"I want to save people, help people. That's a very good feeling," she said of her decision to become a doctor.

Dr Sarmento started her Post Graduate Diploma in Ophthalmology in 2016 and, like the other trainees, spent two months in Nepal performing small incision cataract surgery (SICS).

"I performed 56 SICS" she said. "At first I had a lot of problems because my hands were shaking a lot but I am learning now."

Dr Sarmento loves the challenge of eye surgery.

"Ophthalmology is different. It combines the eyes, mind and hands," she said. "When a patient comes back after being treated and they're smiling it warms your heart."