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Wollongong Nurse wins ‘Nurse of the Year’

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) Nurse and clinical researcher, Professor Kate Curtis, has been awarded the HESTA 2019 Australian Nurse of the Year for her tireless work in advocating to improve emergency hospital care across Australia and internationally, particularly for injured children.

In receiving the top honour at the 2019 HESTA Australian Nursing & Midwifery Awards ceremony in Melbourne last night, Professor Curtis said the award recognises her extensive research that is now helping many young patients.

“The most rewarding thing about this work is knowing that we’re making a difference through research and advocacy for this pandemic that is childhood injury. Injury is the leading cause of death and disability in Australian kids,” she said.

Professor Curtis was instrumental in obtaining federal funding to develop a National Injury Prevention Strategy and is an internationally renowned emergency and trauma nurse clinical researcher, whose studies into injury prevention and treatment has improved clinical practice both in Australia and around the world.

One of the most published emergency and trauma nurses, her evidence-based models of trauma care has improved equitable access to quality emergency treatment.

“Part of what I do is to try and ensure that everyone gets equitable access to emergency and trauma care so that no matter where you get injured in Australia you have the same opportunity for survival,” Professor Curtis said.

“Emergency and trauma care is an opportunity to help people at the worst time of their lives. It’s also an opportunity to apply science and clinical skills to save lives,” she added.

Professor Curtis combines her clinical work with academic roles to produce ground-breaking studies on paediatric and emergency trauma care. She also founded the Childhood Injury Prevention Alliance (CHIPA) to improve injury treatment and prevention and tirelessly advocated for a national injury prevention strategy.

Professor Curtis said she will use the prize money towards emergency care education sessions in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, to help clinicians access the most up to date evidence-based care.

The national awards recognise nurses, midwives, nurse educators, researchers and personal care workers who excel in their area of expertise or service provision across the three Award categories — Nurse of the Year, Midwife of the Year and Team Excellence.

Editor’s note: Kate Curtis is available for interview by phone on Friday 10 May.

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