

Miriam Vollweiler, RN

Miriam Vollweiler works as the infection prevention and control / occupational health and safety nurse at Mercy Hospital, a private surgical hospital located in Dunedin, New Zealand.

With a background in occupational health and involvement in New Zealand's commitment to a Smokefree policy, it seemed only logical to extend these national public health developments to the theatre environment.

It seems only yesterday that staff made comments about the smell in operating theatres and how you could tell what type of surgery was happening due to the odour. *"It's always been that way"* was the response from staff and management. The recognition of electrosurgical smoke plume as a respiratory hazard and implementation of a range of control measures by staff and management has been a casebook occupational health and safety project. These efforts have taken commitment in time, money, systems and attitude change from the board, management and theatre staff.

Integral to this project were nurses who had an interest in workplace health and safety issues and reading overseas journals where research into the respiratory effects of smoke plume was being published. The range of workplace health symptoms in our theatres (*think of nights out in the times of a really smoky pub...*) and the research findings matched and ignited a passion in staff to bring about change.

Miriam is committed to sharing the Mercy Hospital journey to bring about change- Smokefree theatres have got to be good for you.