



# Choosing or changing your career path

*Pauline Hill*

Whether you're just starting to think about entering the workforce, or you're a long-term employee ready for a change, there is a lot to consider and prepare for – and adding a bleeding disorder to the mix doesn't make it any easier.

During Bleeding Disorders Awareness Month in 2022, we ran a series of webinars aimed at supporting people with haemophilia, von Willebrand disease (VWD) and other rare bleeding disorders. For the webinar **Choosing or changing your career path**, we were joined by Craig Eastwood from Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors Service and Penny McCarthy, Haemophilia Nurse from The Alfred hospital in Melbourne.

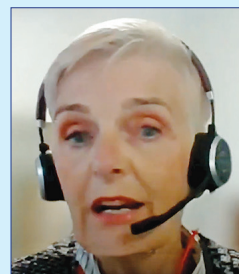
## Choosing or changing your career path

HFA Zoom and Facebook Live webinar, 18 October 2022

**Facilitator ~ Natasha Coco,**  
Haemophilia Foundation Australia

### Speakers

~ **Penny McCarthy,**  
Clinical Nurse Consultant,  
Ronald Sawers Haemophilia Centre,  
The Alfred hospital, Melbourne



~ **Craig Eastwood,**  
Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors Service



Watch the webinar online -  
<https://tinyurl.com/HFA-Changingcareers-webinar>

## WHY DO WE WORK?

Penny opened the presentation asking, ‘Why do we work?’ The simple answer might be - money. ‘We all love money. We need money to look after ourselves, support our families, give us the financial freedom to do the things we want to do, like travel, and provide us with security.’

But it’s so much more than just money.

‘To go to work means you have a job, you learn new skills and you gain new experiences. You follow a set routine, which in turn makes good habits – you have to get up in the morning and go to work, have to plan ahead for when to have treatments, organise doctor’s appointments, and so on.’

Working also gives us opportunities to be social and connect with our community.

### Every job gives you new skills and experiences:

- We connect and socialise with people in the community.
- Having a job and somewhere to go is a really important aspect of our life.
- We can make a positive contribution to society
- We can look after ourselves and our families - and not have to rely on government support
- It helps us to maintain a level of mental and physical health.

## FINDING A JOB

Sometimes finding work, or even knowing what career path you might want to take, can be a real challenge. Craig Eastwood explained how career guidance counsellors can help us to gain the tools and confidence to understand, develop and self-manage our career options.

‘Career guidance counsellors work with people one-on-one to understand and develop their sense of purpose and provide direction. Whether it’s a first job, a ‘survival’ job, or your dream job.’

‘Our service looks at you, the person, and we go from there. Understanding all your obstacles, your challenges, your constraints, your frustrations – but also all your skills, your strengths, experience, your relationships with your peer group – and then we build out a plan for you.’

### When to seek a career counsellor:

- Unsure of your work/career options and pathways
- Seeking employment but don’t have a clear vocational pathway/plan
- Unemployed and struggling to secure work due to lack of work experience (e.g. recent graduates)
- Underemployed and seeking more secure and/or skilled work
- In need of support to plan a transition to a new occupation/career
- Wishing to pursue a professional career involving tertiary education pathways.

Career guidance sessions help you to develop a career plan, identify skills and strengths, identify labour market trends, assist with resumes, and provide interview coaching.

## PREPARING FOR WORK

Both Penny and Craig spoke in detail about preparing for work.

Depending on the type of work, you may need to get ‘work fit’. Penny explained, ‘Work fit is getting in the best physical shape you can be for the job you want to do. If you wanted to run a marathon you’d have to exercise first. It’s the same for a job – whether it’s a physical job with ladders, or a desk job and you need to look after your back.’

Craig suggested, ‘For people with a disability, you might need to identify how your workplace can better accommodate you. You have a lot of power and agency in the workplace and there are a lot of organisations out there that are really driven to assist persons with a disability.’

One of the key difficulties identified for people with bleeding disorders was simply talking about their health condition and explaining it to a current or prospective employer. Both Craig and Penny were quick to recommend looking to your support network for assistance. Craig suggested role playing a conversation first in a comfortable environment and bringing any questions or notes with you to the interview or meeting.

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Penny noted that people with bleeding disorders may sometimes have trouble articulating what their health condition is, ‘and then they might freeze or get really anxious when someone asks about it.

‘This is where your HTC or Foundation can come in to help give you the words to use to explain to others in such a way that prevents misunderstandings.’

## Disclosure

If you are unsure whether you need to disclose your bleeding disorder it may be helpful to speak with your Haemophilia Treatment Centre (HTC). You can also find out more at:

- **Disclosure (HFA) -**  
[www.haemophilia.org.au/disclosure](http://www.haemophilia.org.au/disclosure)
- **Disability disclosure chart (CRS Australia) -**  
<https://tinyurl.com/CRSdisabilitydisclosurechart>



## MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

The webinar concluded with a lively Q&A session during which Penny and Craig fielded questions from the audience.

One of the key questions that came up asked, ‘How do I take into account my intermittent issues? Most of the time I’m fine – I don’t have a disability as such – but sometimes I might have a bleed and be restricted for a couple of weeks. How do I explain that might happen?’

Penny described this as being similar to a chronic migraine, epilepsy, or diabetes.

‘You are fine most of the time. But when it happens, it takes you out for a while.’

She recommended speaking with your HTC or Foundation to develop the words needed to explain this and provide a work certificate or letter of support for work.

Craig commented, ‘In the world of flexible work arrangements, where working virtually is the norm, or only working a specific roster, it is possible for your employer to develop contingencies around that if you can inform them in advance that it’s a possibility and develop a plan.’

Penny concluded, ‘People can’t bear surprises. It’s surprises that hurt the employer. But if you are a good employee and look for alternatives – perhaps working from home for that six-week period, or seeing what other options are available – it works.’

Thank you so much to Penny and Craig for taking the time to share their thoughts and knowledge during this webinar.

## Find out more

Visit the webinar page on the HFA website to

- watch the webinar
- find links to career counselling services in your state or territory and other support organisations

[https://tinyurl.com/HFA-  
Changingcareers-webinar](https://tinyurl.com/HFA-Changingcareers-webinar)



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