



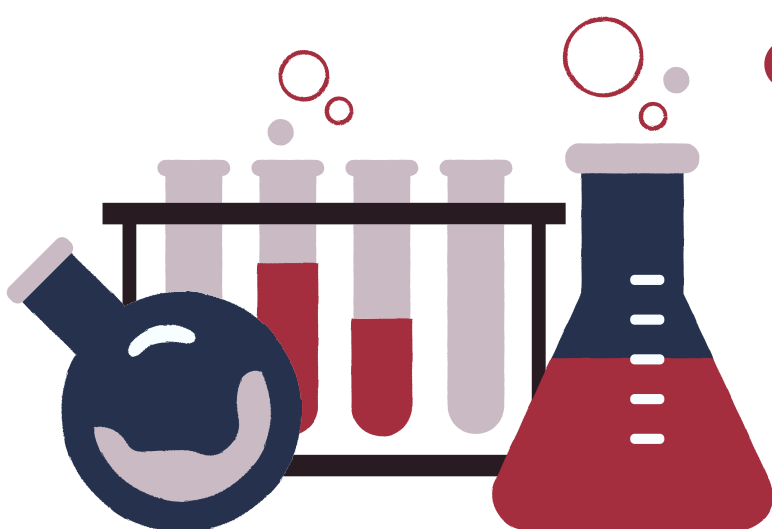
MARIA CABRERA-AGUAS

Research Associate
The University of Sydney, Save Sight Institute
Bogota, Colombia & Sydney, Australia



FROM PATIENT TO STUDENT

I was diagnosed with amblyopia at age 8, so I had an early interest in ophthalmology. I decided to obtain my Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery in Colombia with hopes of becoming an ophthalmologist. Once in medical school, I took electives related to ophthalmology and networked with professors who worked in the field.



A DIFFERENT PATH

I struggled to get a position in research after completing the MIPH. Since I had a deep interest in ophthalmology and vision research, I looked into opportunities at the Save Sight Institute at the University of Sydney to gain more experience in research. I was offered a project position in clinical translation and enrolled in a Master of Philosophy in Research. I converted the Master into a Doctorate two years later.



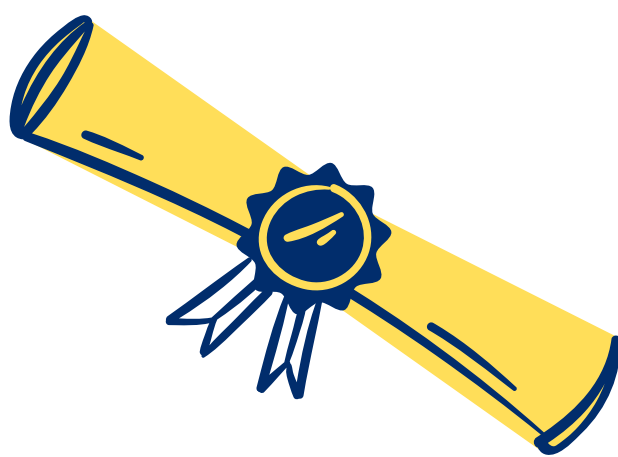
SECONDARY SCHOOL

I attended secondary school in Bogota, Colombia, where all classes were required. I found myself liking and getting good marks in biology in chemistry, which made me begin considering studying medicine,



NEW DEGREE, NEW COUNTRY

I moved to Australia to pursue a Master of International Public Health (MIPH). Core courses included biostatistics and epidemiology, international public health and health promotion. Elective courses included advanced epidemiology and infectious diseases. All these courses have contributed to positions I held during my doctoral studies, such as a Clinical Researcher and Project Officer.



LOOKING BACK...

I suggest participating in a research project as an elective during your university studies, if possible. Having this type of experience exposes you to networking, and provides project experience. For example, you may learn how to conduct a literature review and/or manage data collection and analysis, all of which are valuable skills for a variety of positions or for applying for a PhD program.