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Congratulations on being shortlisted for the RCNi Nurse Awards. It is such an achievement and extra special in the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife. I have been an RCNi Nurse Awards judge for some years and I know the standard of entries is very high.

The interview using Zoom will be a professional event, just as if it were face-to-face, and the panel's impression of you will be based on how you come across on the video. They expect to see a nurse who is in command of their subject, engages with them and showcases their work. This applies even though the circumstances are strange, especially if you are more used to virtual meetings in a social rather than a professional setting. Here are my top tips for success:

1. Plan for the interview as if you were going to be in the same room as the interviewers. This means preparing a presentation, deciding on the key messages you want the panel to know, and using your experience to tell your story with confidence and self-assurance. Practising with someone beforehand may help. The panel will try to put you at your ease and interact with you. They want to help you be natural, confident and professional and find out about you, your project and what you have done with it since it was submitted.
2. Think ahead and organise the technology in advance and practise with it – you can record yourself and watch it back. This includes computer or phone, internet connection, camera and microphone. Decide whether you want to show your presentation, for example on PowerPoint, using the 'share screen' facility or whether you will just have notes in front of you, which will prevent you being able to share graphics, photos and other information that might help describe your work. The choice is yours and either way you need to be prepared to present it.
3. Look at your environment and try to get an uncluttered background such as a plain wall. If you use a phone, prop it up rather than holding it in the hand as movement will distract the interviewers. Use headphones if it helps you. The interviewers will expect you to concentrate on the interview so turn off all alerts on your phone or computer.
4. Good lighting makes a difference to the impression you will make so do not sit with a window behind you, rather have light coming in from the front or side and use lamps. Shut the door so you are not interrupted, look into the camera and smile.

5. Dress as if it was a face-to-face interview. Test the outfit on camera beforehand as some colours and materials work better than others. It may help to think about what you are wearing 'out of shot' too, such as shoes, as they put you into a professional mindset.
6. There will be several people on the panel and actions such as acknowledging people as they are introduced and smiling all apply in virtual interviews. Similarly sitting upright with your head at the top of the screen and being composed and not fidgeting will help you project a relaxed image.
7. Use body language and watch the panel members' expressions and posture for cues as to their response. Gestures are fine but keeping the hands near the body will be less distracting to the panel members.
8. To make eye contact, look at the camera rather than the screen or the picture of the person with whom you are talking. The camera needs to be lined up to your eyes so you look straight into it – raise the equipment if needed.
9. Try to site your upper body in the picture, not just your face, as it will help the panel see you better. Assume the panel will see everything you do.
10. Just as in any interview, if you have not understood or heard a question ask the person to repeat it. Listening, commenting and adding supplementary information all contribute to a successful interview.

And finally, on the day be ready early and have a final trial run with the equipment. Read through your application and presentation. And remember, the panel wants you to do well, so enjoy the experience.

Good luck!

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