

## The President's Page

Those of you who managed to join us for our online seminar on 16 October will agree we have cause to celebrate a new Society initiative led by Councillor Kate Irving. At this event we were treated to a talk by PhD candidate Samantha Kohl Grey from the University of Queensland speaking on 'Psychogenic Sterility and the Development of Endocrinology in Mid-Century Australia', and by Dr Paige Donaghy, a McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies, University of Melbourne, on 'After Birth: A History of the Placenta in European Medicine, 1550-1750'. Paige is not only the current secretary of the Society but was awarded the 2024 Australian Historical Association General Thesis Prize [for non-Australian topics] for her thesis completed in 2023 on 'Uncertain Knowledge: False Conceptions and Molas in European Medicine, 1500-1800'. A big congratulations to Paige, and a great advertisement for our discipline.

This was the second online seminar since the program began earlier this year, the first hosting Auckland PhD candidate Helen Morten on dietary advice and food faddism in Aotearoa New Zealand from 1920-1960 (Helen's thesis is currently under examination) and early career researcher Dr Janine Cook on public reactions and stigma surrounding the establishment of community mental health services in Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 1980s-early 1990s.

We strongly believe that postgraduate and early career researchers are crucial to the health and wellbeing of the Society. That is why for some years now we have awarded grants to assist postgraduate students and early career researchers to attend and present at our biennial conferences. From 2018 these were renamed the Ben

Ben Haneman Memorial Conference Grants for Postgraduate Research Students and Early Career Researchers, in honour of long-standing member and former president Ben Haneman who passionately believed in encouraging the next generation of researchers in the history of medicine. While some members may grumble that they do not stay with us for long, as they move on to other careers and interests, my own sense is that they infuse the conferences with freshness and originality as they present their chosen research topics. This can only be to the betterment of the discipline. It also helps them – in many cases it is their first experience of an international conference, speaking in front of an audience and engaging with senior academics and researchers. And they might one day return to their early passion for the history of medicine, even if they pursue other career paths in the meantime.

Recognising the great value of this sector to the Society, at the last AGM we elected to create another specified position on Council, that of Postgraduate and Early Career Research Officer. The remit of this new officer is to encourage involvement of this sector in the Society affairs and to support them through organising schemes and/or events. The first to hold this post is none other than the second presenter at the October online seminar Samantha Kohl Grey. Thanks Sam! The online seminars form a good starting point to encourage, bring to the fore, and celebrate research from young and emerging scholars.

And, finally, very best wishes to all for the approaching festive season and for a very happy 2025!

Linda Bryder

[l.bryder@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:l.bryder@auckland.ac.nz)



The Australian and New Zealand Society of the History of Medicine acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and the Torres Strait, and their continuing connection to land, waters and community, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. In respect to Aotearoa New Zealand, we acknowledge and respect the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

# All About Ourselves

*Members of the ANZSHM describe their life, work and interests.*

## Peter Lewis

All I knew was that I wanted to attend university. I didn't know why or how, but healthcare professions were attractive prospects, and I ended up responding to a newspaper advertisement offering admission to study a Diploma of Applied Science (Nursing) at Kuring-Gai College of Advanced Education in 1989. So began a career as a Registered Nurse that was spent exclusively in paediatric and adolescent health, mostly at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children (Camperdown and then Westmead).

Ever on the look out for an opportunity to learn more, and with an interest in modern history dating back to primary school, I undertook my first degree, a Bachelor of Arts at Macquarie University. The course was a wonderful introduction to the grand narratives of history and taught me much about the collection and interpretation of historical evidence. I did not undertake the degree with any particular goal in mind and in those days, part-time enrolment for a full time worker was very economical.

In 2005, I successfully applied for a position as research assistant in the newly established Nursing Research and Practice Development Unit at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. One taste of research, its questions and processes, and I was hooked. A nurse colleague, aware of my enthusiasm for research and my eclectic disciplinary interests, referred me to the Centre for Values, Ethics, and the Law in Medicine (VELiM) at the University of Sydney where, after completing a small qualitative study of paediatric hospital patient bedside displays, their presentation and meaning, I was appointed as the PhD candidate on an ARC Linkage grant project called Growing up with Cancer. The Centre was truly multi-disciplinary and in my six years there I was one of only two nurses surrounded by ethicists,



philosophers, physicians, psychologists, and linguists. There was so much to learn about the design and conduct of qualitative health research as well as the history and philosophy of medicine and medical humanities. It was a fabulously dynamic intellectual environment the likes of which I have never re-encountered.

I'm now an academic in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Western Sydney University and in collaboration with Kath Weston of ANZSHM have been in the process of completing an interview-based qualitative study of nurses experiences of caring for people with intellectual disability between 1960 and 2016. The practicing and recently retired nurses who gave so generously of their time to participate in the study have provided dazzling insights into the care of people with intellectual disability in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The participants have provided a much more nuanced understanding of life in large residential institutions, at least for nurses, than a stereotypical representation of segregation, isolation, and abuse.

## The last printed version...

A reminder to members that this issue of the newsletter is the last to be provided in print format. From now on, it will be sent by email and will also be available on the ANZSHM website.

Please go to page 13 to read Charmaine Robson's reflection on the people involved in the history of the printed version.

**Come to our conference in 2025!**

**2025 ANZSHM conference**

See pages 4-5 for details about the conference, the Call for Papers and conference flyer.

## Members' news

### New members

*A warm welcome to our new members*

NSW: Edwin Longhurst; Nicole Don

NZ: Colin Barber

Vic: John Collins

SA: Rebecca Sasche

### Vale

Arabella ('Ellie') Smith

died 25 October 2024

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## Congratulations!

**Lee-Ann Monk**, Joint winner, Cat. 2B, of the 2023 Australian Society of Archivists Mander Jones Award.

Book details: Lee-Ann Monk and David Henderson, with Christine Bigby, Richard Broome & Katie Holmes. "Failed Ambitions: Kew Cottages and Changing Ideas of Intellectual Disabilities". Monash University Publishing Melbourne, 2023. <https://publishing.monash.edu/product/failed-ambitions/>  
Society's Awards page: <https://www.archivists.org.au/learning-publications/mander-jones-awards-recipients>

Judges' citation: "A meticulously researched account of the history of Kew Cottages and the system in which it operated. This work makes effective use of archival records while noting their limitations regarding the voices of the residents. Well written and readable despite the challenging subject matter."

**Catharine Coleborne**, State Library of New South Wales visiting fellow 2025 for her project: *Australians and the Experience of Polio in the 1950s*.

**Alison Downham-Moore**, elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities for her "outstanding contribution to the histories of medicine, sexuality and gender, especially in the area of French history."

### ANZSHM Biennial Book Prize

The ANZSHM Biennial Book Prize recognizes the best book on the history of health and medicine in Australia, New Zealand, and the wider Oceania region published within a specified two-year period. The prize, valued at \$500, will next be awarded at the 2025 ANZSHM conference.

Books published between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024 are eligible for consideration. Only sole-authored or multi-authored monographs will be considered; edited collections and exhibition catalogues are ineligible. Nominations may be submitted by either publishers or the author(s). Authors or publishers must provide three hardcopies of the nominated book to the judges for review. The winner will be selected based on the book's accessibility to a wider audience and its contribution to the field of health and medical history.

Nominations, including details of the book and publisher, should be submitted to the Secretary at [anzshm@anzshm.org.au](mailto:anzshm@anzshm.org.au) by 1 March 2025. Books must be made available to the judges by 1 April 2025.

All nominated books will be displayed at the Society's biennial conference dinner, where the finalists and the prize winner will be announced.

## Call for papers



### AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE (ANZSHM)

#### 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Sydney, 2025

#### Health History in the Making

Sydney University (Camperdown campus)

Tuesday 8 July - Friday 12 July

Saturday 13 July: Witness Seminar

#### CALL FOR PAPERS

The ANZSHM is delighted to open the call for papers for its 19<sup>th</sup> biennial conference in Sydney, 8-12 July 2025 with the theme 'Health History in the Making'.

How does medical history continue to be made in our own times and what is its impact? And how is it being recorded? The last 50 years have seen many changes in health and medicine - some spectacular, some devastating. We invite papers that explore these recent histories in line with our conference theme. Papers on any aspect or timeframe of health and medical history

are also most welcome.

The conference will be held entirely at Sydney University, Camperdown campus. It will feature keynote speeches by three prominent historians; plenary panels on Australian Indigenous health, South-East Asian health history and the GLAM sector (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums); and a rare books exhibition, Keeping Sydney Healthy.

Our witness seminar From Hospital Ward to Mortarboard will explore the transition of nurse training into higher education.

#### Submissions

Submissions should include an abstract of 300 words maximum and a 50-word CV/biography. Proposals for panels of 3-4 presentations are also welcome and should include the same information plus the panel's topic.

Submissions are due by Friday 28 February 2025 at <https://www.anzshm2025.com/>. Notification of the outcome of submissions will be early in April 2025.

The ANZSHM offers a limited number of Ben Haneman Memorial Conference Grants to assist higher degree research students and early career researchers attend the conference.

Information and application forms are available at [anzshm2025.com](http://anzshm2025.com) or [anzshm.org.au/conferences](http://anzshm.org.au/conferences). Grant applications must be made with abstract submissions.

#### Would you like to host the 2027 ANZSHM conference in your city/region?

The ANZSHM Council is calling for expressions of interest for the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennial conference to be held in 2027. This is a great opportunity to bring the Australian and New Zealand medical history communities to your

neck of the woods, and for you and your local colleagues to lead and shape the Society's main activity. The Society offers every assistance to conference organisers. If you have any questions, or would like to register your interest, please contact the ANZSHM Secretary, Paige Donaghy at [anzshm@anzshm.org.au](mailto:anzshm@anzshm.org.au).



SEASON'S  
GREETINGS  
&  
Happy New Year  
2025

from the ANZSHM  
newsletter team



The image shows shipwrecks around Australia and New Zealand. Data are from the Australian National Shipwrecks database. @researchremora



The 19th  
Biennial  
Conference  
of the ANZSHM

8-12  
JULY  
2025

University  
of Sydney

# HEALTH HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Call for Abstracts now open  
Submit via [anzshm2025.com](https://anzshm2025.com)

How does medical and health history continue to be made in our own times and what is its impact? We invite papers that explore these changes over the past 50 years. Papers on any aspects or time periods of health history are also very welcome.

Grants for postgraduate students and early career researchers to attend the conference will be available.

For more information visit  
[anzshm2025.com](https://anzshm2025.com)

To register your interest or for more information please contact NC Events  
[ncosta@ncevents.com.au](mailto:ncosta@ncevents.com.au)

# Medical History Society of Victoria news

On the first weekend in September, members and friends of the Society enjoyed the first “biennial” Country Meeting, since before the Covid-19 pandemic. Forty-five people attended a very enjoyable weekend of history, food, wine and conversation, beginning with a get together at the Bendigo Gallery Café on the Friday evening.

On Saturday, we had the complimentary use of the Monash University School of Rural Health lecture theatre (thanks to Prof. Chris Holmes), to hear 12 speakers present a range of topics. In the evening, we enjoyed dinner at the Brougham Arms Hotel, and the weekend finished with a Sunday morning historical tour of part of the city, led by members of the Bendigo Historical Society.

On the Saturday, Angela Mundy, Library and Archives manager for Bendigo Health, prepared a display of photos, documents and records dating from 1853.

The City of Bendigo has a wonderful history, with many remnants of the “golden” era remaining. Alluvial gold was discovered in October 1851 in the Bednego Creek, soon known as the Bendigo Creek. The discovery attracted thousands of prospectors, and later, when reef quartz gold was also found, extensive underground mining was established. Over the next 100 years, 700,000 kg of gold was extracted.

**Rod Westhorpe** told the story of how Bendigo was indeed named after a boxer. Abednego Thompson, known as Bendigo Thompson, was the All-England bare knuckle champion prize fighter. He was the idol of a shepherd on the Mount Alexander pastoral lease, who named the creek “Bednego Creek”.

Other presentations included the following:

**Angela Mundy** traced the history of Bendigo Health from the first hospital in 1853, leading up to the current huge and modern campus, with many original buildings still in evidence.

**Madonna Grehan** told the story of the introduction in Victoria, of compulsory registration of births and deaths in 1852, and the community and professional tensions that were generated as a result.

**Richard Travers** told the stories of two early health practitioners who had emigrated from England to practise in Bendigo. John Broadbent was a failed bootmaker and self-trained herbalist who established a practice that continued under the family name until 1954. Percy Mole was a dentist who practised in Bendigo from 1887, and established the Bendigo Dental Hospital in 1896.

**Rebecca LeGet**, from the Herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens, described how medicinal herbs were distributed to global herbaria through colonial scientific networks in the 19th century. In re-examining these medicinal specimens, a more nuanced understanding of herbarium collections is gained.

**Desiree Pettit-Keating**, the Archives Officer at the Bendigo Regional Archives Centre described the enormous archival collection held by Bendigo Health, and its value in providing insight into the changing challenges and practices within regional health care. Covering over 170 years of service delivery, the Bendigo Health archive is uniquely placed to tell a very personal story of the district in a way that can challenge the way we think about the past and the way it can be applied to current practice.

**Bill Coote**, former GP, medical economist and AMA Secretary General, took us through the 1920 Australasian Medical Congress held in Brisbane. Over 110 papers were presented across 12 specialty sections. Topics included the recent influenza pandemic and medical aspects of the World War. A symposium debated whether the “white race” could survive and thrive in the Australian tropics.

**Neville D Yeomans**, past President of the MHSV, used selected biographies to illustrate the struggles and achievements of women in medicine in Australia and New Zealand, over the 50 years from 1880. No woman was registered to practise in medicine until 1890, and by the year of Federation, only 0.5 percent of doctors were women. In New Zealand, the situation was similar.

**Allan Mawdsley** discussed the life of John William Springthorpe, an important physician in 19<sup>th</sup> century Melbourne who took major advocacy roles in physiotherapy, dentistry, nursing, public health, child welfare, epilepsy, and mental health. His bitter criticism of the mistreatment of ‘shell shock’ victims during World War I changed our understanding of PTSD.

Using items from the RANZCO Museum, the curator, **David Kaufman**, described how model eyes evolved from the Middle Ages. Complemented by artists’ renditions of the eye, early concepts lacked understanding of anatomy and function. The Museum possesses model eyes from as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Sue Sherson** presented a review of the use of condolence letters sent to next of kin following the death of patients in hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The condolence letter, with bereavement support information one week following the death of a patient, was in response to the recognised impact of visiting restrictions on family and friends’ grief.

**Peter Burke**, who began medical school at the University of Melbourne in 1964, reminisced the life of a medical student of the time, using many preserved mementoes, and numerous anecdotes.

Rod Westhorpe, Hon Secretary  
Medical History Society of Victoria

## South Australian Medical Heritage Society news

Members of SAMHS have enjoyed a diverse range of talks this year. The most recent was on Jack Jumper (Hopper) Ants, notorious for causing significant allergic reactions in Tasmania where around three percent of the population suffer anaphylactic responses or experience generalized reactions to their stings. Happily, immunotherapy using ant venom has proven highly effective. Dr. Chino Yuson delivered a captivating talk about the development of this therapy, joined on stage by Prof. Bob Heddle, whose pioneering research was instrumental in its advancement.



Earlier in the year, members enjoyed two talks on tuberculosis. Dr. Julie Collins, the South Australian Historian of the Year and senior research fellow at UniSA, shared architectural insights into open-air treatments at two South Australian sanatoria, Nunyara

and Kalyra. In contrast, Dr. Simone Barry, thoracic physician and head of South Australia's TB Service, gave a broader overview of tuberculosis history, from ancient times to the present. Her talk introduced the concept of "consumptive chic" among fashion-conscious Victorians and discussed how sunlight therapy influenced modern tanning culture. She also highlighted current challenges, such as multidrug-resistant TB and the difficulties of providing treatment in remote areas over extended periods.

Other recent talks include one by Professor Toby Coates AO on pancreas and kidney transplants. He traced the evolution of anastomosis, transplant, and transfusion techniques, concluding with current ethical dilemmas such as xenotransplants. Dr. David Cherry AM delivered a thought-provoking talk on pain management, reflecting on his career in anaesthesia and describing successful but discontinued treatments.

The eagerly anticipated Christmas talk by Dr. Ross Philpot OAM will delve into the history of venereology.

Maggi Boulton

Hon Secretary (on behalf of the SAMHS Committee)

## New Zealand History of Medicine news

Kia ora, here's some news of interest directly copied from the University of Otago website:

"The 28th Māori Battalion suffered disproportionate casualties and critical injuries in World War II. Yet, we know little about the medical care these men received and how war impacted the lives of injured veterans.

'Kia Hauora Anō', the first historical study on the nature and impact of war wounds and disease on Māori veterans of WWII, has received \$660,000 in Marsden funding to investigate this significant part of Aotearoa history.

The two primary investigators on this project are Professor Angela Wanhalla (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāi Te Ruahikihiki) and Dr Claire Macindoe, both from Kā Kōrero o Nehe - the History programme at Ōtakou Whakaihu Waka - the University of Otago.

Angela says they are humbled by this award and "look forward to bringing attention to a little-known aspect of Māori history".

Those who served in the Battalion in the Second World War had one of the highest casualty rates in the Second

New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Their injuries were also disproportionately critical, and so they were in greater need of appropriate medical treatment, aftercare and rehabilitation.

"These matters of health impacted the lives of Māori veterans during and after war service, yet there has been no comprehensive, historically informed investigation into the nature of war wounds, disease, and treatment experienced by these men," Angela says.

This study will provide important knowledge that will inform historical questions of equity and Māori self-determination, Angela says.

"Our research project will investigate a range of historical sources to determine the extent to which Māori servicemen were able to access health care and treatment during and after the war."

Claire says that as the first historical study on the nature and impact of war wounds, disease, and medical aftercare, the project will produce new insights into the health impacts of global war on Māori veterans during the war and as they aged. "These are men with significant lives post-war that need to be accounted for."

The link is here: <https://www.otago.ac.nz/news/newsroom/study-of-wwii-maori-veterans-receives-marsden-funding>

Barbara Brookes

## NSW Branch news

### Report on the Ben Haneman Memorial Lecture 2024

“From Prohibition to Rapid Global Rollout: Spain’s smallpox vaccination response in the nineteenth century” Emeritus Professor Michael Bennett. University of Tasmania

The Ben Haneman Memorial Lecture was held on August 21st at the State Library of NSW. This lecture was given by Emeritus Professor Michael Bennett from the University of Tasmania who spoke about his continuing interest in smallpox and the rollout of the smallpox vaccination. Professor Bennett, in keeping with Ben Haneman’s interest in all things Spanish, spoke about Spain’s rapid rollout of the smallpox vaccination in the early nineteenth century.

This was a fascinating talk about how the vaccine was carried by a sailing ship from Spain to the Spanish colonies throughout South America and Asia by recruiting boys who would be inoculated one by one through the voyage. As the inoculation lasted two weeks but was most effective on day 8, a pair of boys would be selected to be inoculated in transit to the colonies. Once the ship had reached the colonies, the final boys who were inoculated on board would become the carriers for inoculation in the local population. Of course, new boys had to be recruited from local populations to continue this ingenious method of carrying the smallpox vaccination across the world.

Professor Bennett was a generous speaker who spent time after the talk answering many questions from the audience and we would like to publicly acknowledge his outstanding contribution to understanding the role of vaccination in fighting infectious disease.

The NSW Executive of ANZSHM would also like to thank the State Library of NSW Foundation, especially Susan Hunt, for their continuous support and help in making the Ben Haneman Memorial Lecture such a success.

Diana Jefferies, Vice-President, ANZSHM-NSW

**Report on Roundtable discussion:** ‘5 years on from COVID-19: lessons from past health crises and the future of global health’.

On 13 September, as part of History Week NSW, a panel discussion was held on the above topic at the Sydney Mechanics’ School of the Arts (SMSA) and streamed live. Philippa Barr, treasurer of ANZSHM-NSW, organised the panel – invited the speakers, designed the questions, and chaired the discussion. The History Council of NSW hosted the event while ANZSHM-NSW and SMSA gave their support, as well as the latter providing the venue. The panel (see image below) consisted of an impressive line-up of experts in virology, immunology, public health, and medical humanities who generously gave their time: Edward Holmes, Claire Hooker, Julie Leask, Brent Mackie, Bernadette Saunders, Susana Vaz Nery and Jane Williams. It was a privilege for the audience to hear their perspectives, their experiences and about the work some of them were currently undertaking such as research into tuberculosis and m-pox. The speakers also answered the many questions from an enthusiastic audience. If there was one message to be taken away from the evening, it was that we, as a society, remain always susceptible to the emergence of new pandemics. But, with brilliant researchers like Holmes, who was the first person to discover a genetic sequence of SARS-CoV-2, and policymakers’ lessons from the COVID-19 lockdown, the prospect does not seem so dire. Congratulations to Philippa for making this panel discussion happen.

Charmaine Robson, President, ANZSHM-NSW



## Letter to the Editor

Dear members and friends,

Staunch members of the Society, Gordon and Rosie Low, have decided to relocate to Hong Kong for the remainder of their retirement years. They will be greatly missed, as regular attendees at meetings, and for their charm and good humour.

Gordon is well remembered for his wonderful lecture some years ago on the introduction of Western Medicine

into China. He has written a book (e-book) on his life, entitled *A Journey from Hankow to Melbourne*, and kindly wishes it to be freely available for anyone to enjoy reading. The link to the book is here.

<https://digitalrepository.lib.hku.hk/catalog/6t059h54h#?c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-2735%2C-152%2C7269%2C3000>

We wish Gordon and Rosie all the best in their travels and their new home.

Rod Westhorpe  
Hon Secretary  
Medical History Society of Victoria



# What is Medical History?

## The construction of PTSD and the Australian veteran

### Effie Karageorgos

I was asked to write this piece defining medical history only days before the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide released its final report. At the time of writing, the report has been public for approximately one month, and has attracted significant media attention on its 3000 pages of findings and 122 recommendations based on the testimony of almost 6000 submissions received over the over 3 years since the Royal Commission was established.

The Royal Commission's final report is a deeply political document that contains profound insights into the lives of Australian soldiers and veterans irrevocably changed by their military service. This is a document that cannot be understood without referring to how ideas about military mental health, psychiatry, the soldier and Australian nationalism were formed and have changed in the decades since the first nationwide military commitment in South Africa from 1899 until 1902. Given the significance of the Royal Commission in the lives of so many Australian soldiers and veterans, I would like to spend this short piece discussing this aspect of medical, or psychiatric, history through the multi-faceted basis of war trauma diagnosis in the more recent past.

The livelihood of soldiers and veterans who are so traumatised by their military service that they require financial or other supports are governed today by the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) category within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental

Disorders, specifically its latest iteration – DSM-5 (2013). The PTSD diagnosis first appeared in the DSM-III of 1980 and represents one moment where war history meets medical history and has governed the passage of many veterans from soldier to psychiatric patient.

Much has been written about the social and political construction of PTSD. The specific symptoms seen in Vietnam War veterans that resulted from the mode of warfare fought during the conflict appeared at a time when deinstitutionalisation and community mental health care had been officially adopted by a range of nations, prompted by the development of psychotropic medications that made it possible for the mentally ill to live in the community. Public and media advocacy by US anti-war psychiatrists Chaim Shatan and Robert Lifton turned 'post-Vietnam syndrome' into a recognised public issue, and political desire for more precisely defined psychiatric categories to allow for a streamlining of community mental health care led to its subsequent renaming to PTSD and inclusion in DSM-III.

The recognition of PTSD by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) from the early 1980s legitimised the traumatic conditions of many veterans in need. It also meant that, officially at least, Australian Vietnam veterans could return to their military identity and regain some of the respectability they felt they'd lost through their psychiatric condition.

The history of military mental health, and particularly the appearance of PTSD in DSM-III is thus not merely a medical, or psychiatric, story, but also one that encompasses social, cultural, political and military histories. It is one of many medical histories which necessarily exist both within and beyond the medical literature.

## What is 'medical history'?

### *An invitation to hear your perspective....*

*This issue continues our exploration of the idea: "What is Medical History?" We invite contributions from members with different professional backgrounds and experiences, including historians, healthcare practitioners, researchers, educators, and students. Your unique viewpoint will add depth and richness to our exploration of this topic.*

*Your article could cover, but is not limited to:*

- Personal reflections on the significance of medical history in your field of expertise,*
- Insights into how understanding medical history, or the history of medicine, can inform current healthcare practices and policies,*
- Discussions on the role of medical history in shaping cultural, social, and ethical perspectives on health*

*and medicine,*

- Experiences with conducting research or teaching in the field of medical history,*
- Examples of historical events, figures, or discoveries that have influenced the trajectory of medicine.*

*The newsletter provides a platform to explore the knowledge and expertise of the diverse voices within our society, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among our members. Your contribution will help to promote discourse surrounding our understanding of medical history and/or the history of medicine.*

*Please send your article to [anzshm@anzshm.org.au](mailto:anzshm@anzshm.org.au). We encourage submissions of 250-500 words, accompanied by any relevant images or references.*

***There is obvious interest in this topic as evidenced by the number of submissions from members. We will consider publishing a compilation if we continue to receive submissions. Keep them coming in! Ed.***

# What is Medical History?

## The Psychiatric Pen and the Haunted Inkbottle

Robert M. Kaplan

If the past is another country, then I am happy to dwell in it. Training at medical school in South Africa, then working in Australia first in pathology, then in psychiatry, I end up dangling hopeful tentacles in forensics, history, archaeology, prehistory, crime and biography.

My first realisation of changing epochs was in January 1968 when I started at the University of Cape Town Medical School, the month after Chris Barnard had done the first human heart transplant. A frisson ran through all of us: bliss was it to be alive... Destined to be the first Chris Barnard generation, we were anointed with his brilliance, a whole world of possibilities opening up before us.

Well, for better or worse, we got through the grinding ordeal of medical school, only to find that another kind of history had overtaken us, this time not such a millennial fantasy. The South African government had invaded Angola (first omitting to tell anyone) and then came the Soweto riots. It was the beginning of the end of the only world we had known. The status quo that we had grown up with was not to last and it was all over by 1994. Its immediate consequence was a mass migration of my medical school class, making a diaspora around the world, to be followed by many others in the years that followed.

If the history of the world is the history of migration, then, like it or not, I was of this. Like so many others who come to Australia, I had never anticipated being in a new country but the knowledge of many others who came here, often bearing the most terrible of traumas as well as their exotic backgrounds, made it not just challenging but exciting.

I mention this to show that while progressing through a career in psychiatry, the past and its consequences could never be ignored. When I started writing, I was intrigued by doctors, decadent or depraved, who had drifted off the path expected of those who had passed such a lengthy course and taken an oath to save human life. This endeavour started off in a forensic bang, so to say, with the Bosnian War 1992-1995 where the genocide was led by a practicing psychiatrist Dr Radovan Karadzic. Then, in 2000 Dr Harold Shipman, a GP in Hyde, Manchester, was found to be Britain's worst serial killer, with a toll of 246 patients murdered at his hands established at a later inquiry.

What surprised me was how little comment (aside from official responses) these hecatombs attracted from my profession, notably psychiatry. Many writers slog away in darkness till a door opens so this was an opportunity

not to be missed. My first book *Medical Murder: Disturbing Tales of Doctors who Kill* came out in 2009. After that my ambit could not be restrained, extending to genocide, serial murder, history of psychiatry and the doctor-patient interaction; shamanism also getting a look in. But my main effort was directed towards the lives of innovative, challenging and charismatic, sometimes marginal, psychiatrists, a neglected field of biography. Reg Ellery, the upmarket communist Melbourne psychiatrist dominated the local scene (and sourced a movie *Between Wars*) before dying prematurely. Mary Barkas, the New Zealand prodigy who became a star psychiatrist in London after World War 1, studied psychoanalysis with Otto Rank in Vienna and was appointed to the Maudsley Hospital, only to have her career constantly blocked by the prejudice against women, spending the last decades of her life in isolation in remote Tapu.<sup>1</sup> Most recent has been the multi-talented Helen Flanders Dunbar, known as the mother of psychosomatic medicine, brilliant in many other fields but so self destructive, drowning in her swimming pool at a relatively young age – the victim of Accident Proneness, a concept she had pioneered.<sup>2</sup>

Is the message that truly creative doctors are ultimately consumed by a profession that is skewed towards the orthodox, the narrow, the conformist and the technical, rather than those who push against the envelope and insist on including the humanities? Sadly, the answer seems to be yes, but such figures, ultimately self-destructive or martyred, cannot be suppressed and will continue to emerge – and we are all the better for this.

All of the above is a smokescreen for my own dilemma. When I turn to my psychiatric pen (that it is often a keyboard makes no difference) I struggle to extricate myself from the exigencies of my day job, if not the other segues of my life. How successful this is remains to be seen. I have, I realise, no choice but to continue dipping my pen into the haunted inkbottle and that is something likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

Until then is the extrusion of my latest book, more irenic, if not slightly sensational – *The King who Strangled his Psychiatrist and Other Dark Tales* – which, publisher willing, I hope to have out this year. If nothing else, it will get readers to question whether history is something that never happened, written by someone who was never there. I hope that they decide it is not.

*Robert M Kaplan is a forensic psychiatrist, historian and writer.*

<sup>1</sup>To be published as *Promise Unfulfilled: The Life of Mary Barkas, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst.*

<sup>2</sup>Copies of articles available on request

# What is Medical History?

The spirit catches you.....

Meredith Temple-Smith

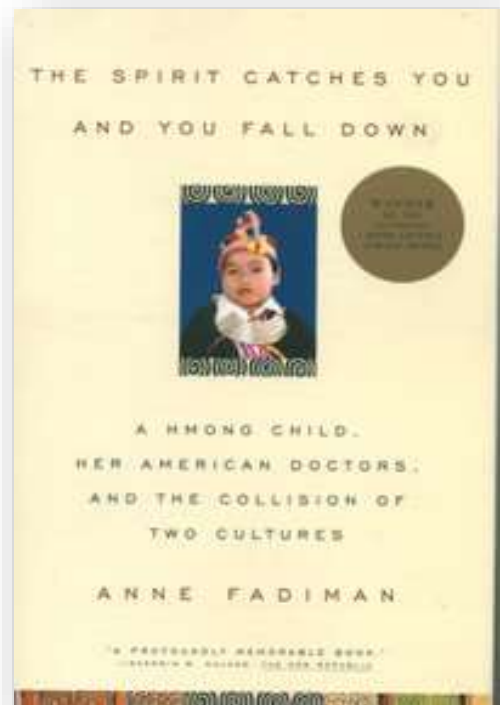
I am a sexual and reproductive health researcher who has been drawn towards stories about the history of medicine throughout my life. When I became a research assistant working in the field of primary care in the 1980s, I saw up close the shaky unfolding of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I remember being surprised to find that decades of public anxiety about syphilis in the late 1800s and early 1900s seemed not to have taught us much about a new epidemic involving human sexual behaviour. Finally, the powers that be recognised that to manage this new epidemic, we needed to involve the communities most affected by HIV/AIDS, and Australia eventually produced the first National HIV/AIDS Strategy in the world. As a country, we *made* history, and it was very exciting to be such a close witness to it.

Having recently completed a Diploma of Medical History at the Society of Apothecaries in London, I now have had the chance to learn how medical history advances different disciplines within medicine in all kinds of ways, by small steps forward within the social context of the time.

Over the last four decades a lot of the research in which I have participated has contributed to small steps forward in the diagnosis of sexually transmissible infections and management of various aspects of sexual and reproductive health. In this evidence-based world, where medical practice is often driven by specific guidelines to speed up diagnosis and treatment, it is easy to overlook the real importance of social context in relation to health and disease, and this is really what interests me most.

The research I love to do explores how social context contributes to perceptions of wellness/sickness, the wellness/sickness itself, and the way in which care is delivered. An excellent and tragic example of this is described in Anne Fadiman's book "The spirit catches you and you fall down" which describes the medical journey of a Hmong child, born in the USA, whose parents did not interpret her epilepsy as an illness. Their interactions with the American health system provides a riveting illustration of why understanding the patient's social context is so important. It also leaves the reader questioning for whose benefit medical protocols are designed.

Even reflecting on the way in which Australian general practice has changed since the mid-1950s from one or two GPs working in a practice they owned, to 20 or more GPs working in a corporate practice, explains a lot about the nature of current doctor-patient interactions. I really wish all medical and allied health students were



given a solid grounding in the history of medicine; this is a topic which seems to have been squeezed out of the curriculum in too many universities. In my own research now, I pay as much attention to the social context of the setting as I do to the phenomenon being explored, and I feel that my research is able to come up with better recommendations as a result of this broader perspective.

## Mystery object

Can anyone identify the mystery object below? Or what is going on? The answer is on page 16.



# Animalia

## The honey bee

There are about 20,000 species of bees worldwide. They pollinate plants and are critical to the ecology of the earth, and hence to the survival of life on our planet.

Throughout history, many cultures have revered bees and have ascribed symbolism to their activity. In ancient Egypt, bees were a sign of power and royalty. In Chinese culture, bees were revered as a symbol of good luck and prosperity while the ancient Greeks considered the bee as a messenger from the gods. In Celtic history, bees symbolised new life, fertility, and wisdom, while First Nations culture in North America believed the bee symbolised honesty and service to others, as well as a productivity and hard work.<sup>1</sup>

Honey from bees is the oldest known wound-healing agent. It has been used in folk medicine to treat inflammation, cough, and fever. Its antimicrobial activity led to its use to treat wounds during past conflicts. Some studies have shown honey to have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory and anti-microbial ability, with suggestions made that honey applied alone or in combination with conventional therapy might represent a new antioxidant in the control of health issues associated with oxidative stress. Other studies have indicated that honey can cause apoptosis (programmed cell death) in cancer cells. Further claims of benefits of honey to human health include in asthma, cardiovascular, neurological and gastrointestinal disorders. More research is needed to provide an evidence-base for the application of honey as an adjunct to conventional therapies.<sup>2</sup>



The fate of bees is in the hands of humans. Across the world, bees have been disappearing. Identification of colony collapse disorder has led to greater awareness of the importance of pollinators and the dire consequences of the loss of bees and other insects. Diseases, pesticides, invasive plant species, habitat loss, low genetic diversity and climate change are all responsible for the current threat to bees.<sup>3</sup> The work ethic of the humble bee should be mirrored in actions of their human beneficiaries to protect this amazing contributor to medicine, health and society.

Kath Weston



### References

<sup>1</sup>The Cultural and Spiritual Meanings of the Bee. Empath Designs. March 29, 2023. Available at: <https://empathdesigns.com/blogs/animal-symbolism/the-cultural-and-spiritual-meanings-of-the-bee?srsltid=AfmBOorhrHS4F7BfoUT7PQNfMk68kB0eQ8MqsU6b9NVm3UTZ2-mAX7mg>

<sup>2</sup>Samarghandian S, et al. Honey and Health: A Review of Recent Clinical Research. *Pharmacognosy Res.* 2017 Apr-Jun;9(2):121-127. doi: 10.4103/0974-8490.204647.

<sup>3</sup>Threats to bees. Paleontological research Institution. 2022. Available at: <https://www.museumoftheearth.org/bees/threats>

## ISHM news

### International Society for the History of Medicine

The society, founded in Paris in 1921, is said to have about 800 members, though at present we think there are only five of us from the ANZSHM. It held its biennial meeting from 9-12 October in Salerno, Italy, with one of its themes the Schola Medica Salernitana – founded in the ninth century CE and believed to be the oldest medical school in Europe that developed a defined curriculum, producing graduates licensed to practice by the king. The Society's official languages are English, French and the language of the country hosting the meeting, so not surprisingly many of the recent papers

were in Italian (though with simultaneous translation for those of us who only studied Italian 101 at uni).

The next major meeting is expected to be in Tunis, Tunisia at dates yet to be set in 2026. However, in the intervening years, the society usually partners with another country's medical history society. They did this with us at our Sydney meeting in 2015, as some will remember. In October 2025 this will be in Madrid with the Spanish society.

Brian Reid was our ANZ national delegate to the ISHM for many years, representing us with distinction. I took over from him in October and would be happy to answer any queries our members might have. The website for the ISHM is: [www.ishm.wikidot.com](http://www.ishm.wikidot.com)

Neville Yeomans (nyeomans@unimelb.edu.au)

## The end of an era of paper and print

This issue of the *Medical History Newsletter* is the last one to be printed out and posted to members. From now on, it will be sent by email and will also be available on the ANZSHM website.

It's therefore a good time to reflect on and thank those people who, over the years, have ensured that the printed Newsletter arrived in members' mailboxes every quarter. In recent years the lion's share of that work was done by ANZSHM Honorary Member and Past President, Dr Anthea Hyslop (pictured at right). She proof-read the Newsletter, made and printed envelope labels, and ordered and collected the printed copies. When they were ready, Dr Di Tibbits hosted a working party with Anthea and Dr Noel Cass to label, load and stamp the envelopes before delivering them to the post office. With members numbering close to 400, it took the best part of a day. But no doubt time flew with lunch and good company.

In pre-email days, the Newsletter was the main means of communicating *en masse* with members so there were always inserts to be slipped into its pages, such as ANZSHM conference announcements, meeting agendas, membership renewal forms and reminders. Anthea, as Secretary for many years, designed the forms and had them printed, and made sure the reminders went to the right members. She was always scrupulous and thoughtful in these tasks – nobody could forget her choice of different coloured paper for different meeting papers (so we could all find the right ones quickly!) Such close attention is quite amazing, considering

Anthea's numerous other roles in the Society and elsewhere. Madonna Grehan, the current Membership Officer, took on the distribution role in 2016.

Julius Schwantzer, proprietor of Elgin Printing at Carlton has done ANZSHM's print jobs for many years. In the early days, he delivered the newsletters to Di Tibbits' home. He has been a pleasure to work with, unfailingly responsive throughout. Hats off to Julius for his sustained service to the Society.

It is with much appreciation of all the behind-the-scenes work of Anthea, Noel, Di, Madonna, and their predecessors, that we farewell the paper version of the Newsletter.

Charmaine Robson

Editorial note: *We hope the on-line version will be just as easy to read. It can be downloaded and printed as per individual preferences. As always, the newsletter content relies on member contributions, and we love hearing from you. Please keep all the articles coming in!*



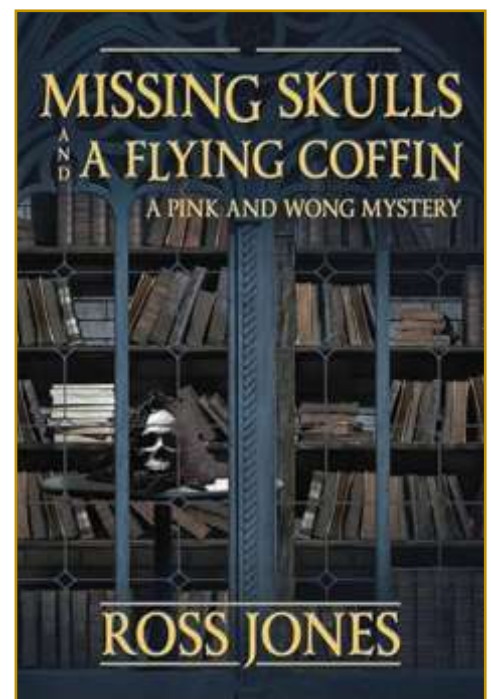
## Book note

Dr Ross L. Jones, ANZSHM member, has recently branched out from medical history to write a medical crime novel, with the enticing title, *Missing Skulls and a Flying Coffin: a Pink and Wong Mystery*. The synopsis is, as follows:

*On a blustery winter day in Melbourne's Oddfellow's clinic for the sick poor, Dr Ambrose Pink's life changed dramatically and irreversibly. As a consequence he would meet a famous diva and an Australian prime minister. He would cross swords with terrorists, chefs, surgeons, fascists and anthropologists with ancient skulls. He would fall in love with a Chinese barrister. And all of this was because on that day in Fitzroy he was presented with a tiny baby with a disease that didn't exist.*

Published by LeRoy Press and available in hard or soft copy. <https://www.rossjones.com.au/crime-novel-cholera-blues>

Congratulations, Ross!



## Invitation

### INVITATION TO PROMOTE THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE IN AUSTRALIA

The last century has witnessed remarkable advances in medicine. From the advent of antibiotics and nutritional breakthroughs to the rise of subspecialties, developments in genetics, and the introduction of safer, more effective medications, these milestones have transformed healthcare and extended life expectancy, particularly in high-income countries. Despite these achievements, efforts to document and showcase this evolution within Australia have been limited. While several Australian medical museums preserve artifacts of medical history, many are small and cater primarily to medical students and professionals, limiting public access and broader awareness.

Our forthcoming book seeks to bridge this gap by featuring historically significant medical artifacts from Australian museums and private collections. This curated work will highlight approximately 100 items, each accompanied by a high-quality image and a narrative that explains its historical relevance and acquisition

story. Each artifact will appear over a two-page spread, with a 500-word description alongside an image or images that capture its essence. Contributions will be authored by curators, museum staff, or individuals familiar with the artifacts, then carefully edited to ensure a coherent narrative throughout the book. Authorship will be credited at the end of each entry, celebrating the insights of those who safeguard these items.

Additionally, the book will include essays exploring the history of medicine from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives in Australia, providing a broader cultural context. With provisional approval from Wakefield Press to publish, this project aims to deepen understanding and appreciation of our medical heritage.

To identify items of interest, we have reached out to medical museums across Australia and welcome suggestions for artifacts of historical significance, especially those in private collections. If you have or know of items that could contribute to this initiative, please contact us at SA-MHS@outlook.com. We plan to finalize the list of items by early 2025, after which contributors will be invited to submit their drafts for inclusion.

**Ian Roberts-Thomson and Maggi Boulton**

## Publication of interest

The *Journal of Legal History* has just published an article by ANZSHM member Laura Dawes:

Dawes, L. L. (2024). “ ‘And Along Came DNA’: The Introduction of DNA Evidence in Australian Courts in the Applebee case”, *The Journal of Legal History*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440365.2024.2414536>

This was the first case (Canberra, 1989) to use DNA evidence in Australia. This history of forensic medicine and legal history in Australia raises complex and ongoing questions about communicating and using novel forensic medical evidence in legal cases.

The research was made possible by the Chief Justice of the ACT Supreme Court, Lucy McCallum, and the Office of the Commissioner of the Australian Federal

Police, Reece Kershaw, allowing access to their records, respectively, as well as the DNA testing company in the UK finding and sharing a copy of the first Australian autorad (the DNA test picture) from their company archives, as well as the involvement of the families and colleagues of lawyers involved in the case. **The work was awarded a commendation by the Forbes Society (NSW Bar Association) for contribution to Australian legal history.**

The full article is available for download from:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01440365.2024.2414536?src=exp-la>

**Dr Laura Dawes**

Historian of Science, Medicine and the Law  
Centre for the Public Awareness of Science  
Australian National University

## Members' publications

Draper, B., Loi, S. (2024) Young onset dementia in New South Wales, Australia in 1891: What has changed since then? *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 39:e6154 <https://doi.org/10.1002/gps.6154>

Lewis, P., Weston, K. M. (2024). The uniquely relational role of nurses during the closure of large residential institutions for people with intellectual disability in Australia: A qualitative study. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13668250.2024.2394194>

Editorial note: *Please let us know of recent publications relating to the history of medicine so that we can include them in the newsletter.*

## Christmas memorabilia



From the British Red Cross website.

The beautiful handmade card shown below was created by Florence Nightingale in 1897, and sent to her friend, Bessy Coleman.

The front of the card reads:

**‘GOOD FORTUNE  
Thro’ Christmas and A Glad New Year  
May Good Health you betide  
And nothing but Good Fortune, in  
The House where you abide.’**

<https://www.redcross.org.uk/stories/our-movement/our-history/a-christmas-card-from-florence-nightingale>



Doctor and Mrs Syntax, with a party of friends, experimenting with laughing gas. Coloured aquatint by T. Rowlandson after W. Combe. Wellcome Images. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



New Zealand TB Assoc.  
Christmas seal 1954



Christmas stamp 1981  
Australia

## Artefactual news

### **Our Health Journeys – Aotearoa New Zealand’s e-museum of healthcare history**

**Kia whakatōmuri te haere whakamua – I walk backwards into the future with my eyes fixed on my past.**

Our Health Journeys is a national e-museum in Aotearoa New Zealand; an online platform for the sharing and collecting of stories about New Zealand’s healthcare history. Its overarching purpose is to encourage a deeper understanding of New Zealand’s medical history and an appreciation of the importance of medical science in our society.

The Museum first opened its doors virtually (and physically) in 2017 with Brave Hearts, an exhibition that profiled New Zealand’s key contribution to cardiac research and clinical care. From a successful touring exhibition, the idea of expanding the online museum grew and now includes stories and contributions from medical professionals and museums around the country.

From this came the idea to create a different kind of museum, one that gathers our stories solely online and is able to reach all corners of the country as we identify

parallels with the past, tell our stories, share our science, and celebrate our trailblazing people.

This year, Our Health Journeys has partnered with Auckland school Saint Kentigern College, challenging a number of students to conduct research into an aspect of the medical history of Aotearoa New Zealand. These high school students, ranging from Years 8-13, produced their research in written, oral, or video format. The top student projects were chosen for weekly publication to the Our Health Journeys website. Topics included; effective detection of cardiovascular diseases, the invention of the modern syringe, the potential role of Rongoā Māori in New Zealand medicine, advancements in melanoma treatment, and the legacy of key medical figures in New Zealand’s healthcare history including pioneers of plastic surgery and maternity care.

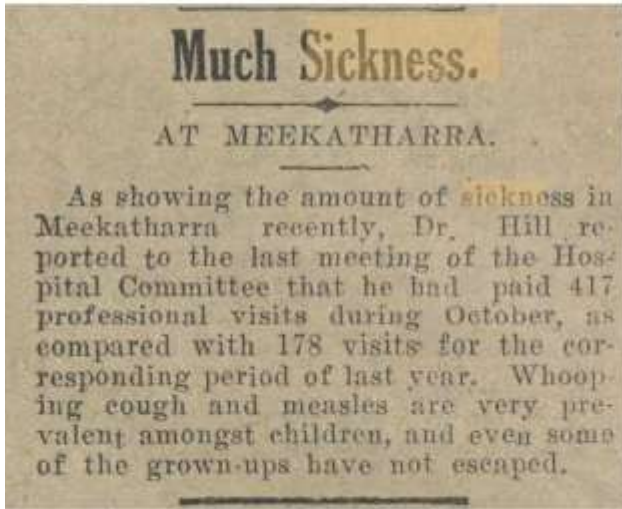
Laura Howard



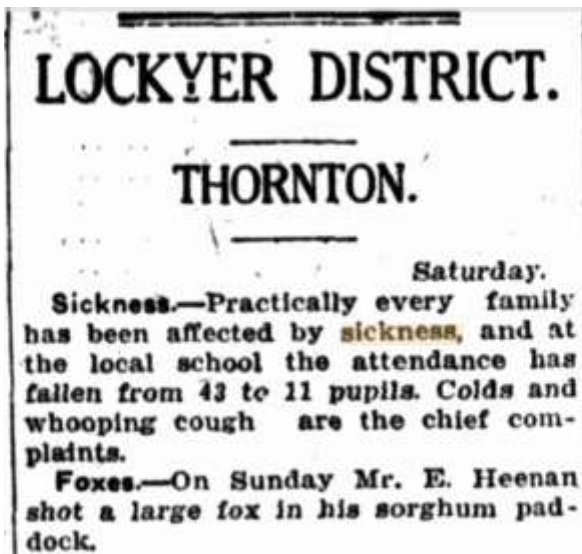
[www.ourhealthmuseum.org.nz](http://www.ourhealthmuseum.org.nz)

*As a small predominantly volunteer-led team, we are interested in hearing from potential guest contributors. Contact Curator and Head of Content Laura Howard: [laura@ourhealthmuseum.org.nz](mailto:laura@ourhealthmuseum.org.nz) for more information.*

## 100 years ago



1924 'Much Sickness.', *The Geraldton Express (WA : 1906 - 1928)*, 19 November, p. 3. , viewed 04 Dec 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article259127194>



1924 'LOCKYER DISTRICT.', *Queensland Times (Ipswich, Qld. : 1909 - 1954)*, 3 November, p. 7. (DAILY.), viewed 04 Dec 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article118591087>



1924 'A NEW AMBULANCE.', *The Maitland Weekly Mercury (NSW : 1894 - 1931)*, 1 November, p. 13. , viewed 04 Dec 2024, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article136525592>

## Call for papers

### Oddities, charlatans and dead ends

#### CALL FOR PAPERS

Quirks, Quacks and Dead Ends

Call for papers: Topics in the History of Medicine , Volume 5 (2025).

Due December 31, 2024

For further information visit:

<https://histoiresante.blogspot.com/2024/11/bizarreries-charlatans-et-culs-de-sacs.html>

### Spontaneous Generation Journal

#### CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue: "Beyond Anthropocentrism: Non-human Agents and Objects in Science"

Call for abstracts of 500 words on papers highlighting the role of non-human objects and agents in science and medicine.

Due December 31, 2024

For further information email:

[spontaneousgenerations2025@gmail.com](mailto:spontaneousgenerations2025@gmail.com)

## Mystery object revealed

The Roentgen steed was a horse-shaped chair, designed to hold a child still while they were having a chest X-rays, 1957.

<https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/terrifying-medical-devices-from-history/>





## Conferences

### 27th International Congress of History of Science and Technology

The 27th International Congress of History of Science and Technology will be held from **29 June - 5 July 2025** at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand.

**Standalone Papers** are due by **1 December 2024**.

For further details, please go to the Congress website: <https://www.ichst2025.org>

#### Conference Details

**The International Congress of History of Science and Technology (ICHST)**, held every four years, is the world's premier meeting for history of science and technology. The 27th Congress will be held as a hybrid in-person and online event at the University of Otago's



Dunedin campus in June-July 2025. Delegates registered for virtual participation will be able to both present and attend online. The Congress will bring together a diverse group of the world's leading scholars and students in the fields of history of science, technology, and medicine as well as related disciplines. It will be the first time the Congress has been held in Australasia and only the second time in the Southern Hemisphere. The theme of the 27th ICHST is "Peoples, Places, Exchanges, and Circulation."

ICHST Website: <https://www.ichst2025.org/>

## History research grant



### Save The Date

The 31st BSHM Congress will be held  
at The University of Leeds  
Wed 10 – Sat 13 Sept 2025.

<https://bshm.org.uk/>



### Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA)

The purpose of the \$5000 Anaesthesia and Pain Medicine History Research Grant is to wholly or partly fund projects that will advance the knowledge and understanding of the history of anaesthesia and pain medicine in Australia and New Zealand.

The closing date is 5pm (AEDT) 1 April 2025

For more information visit: <https://www.anzca.edu.au/news/anzca-research-grants-for-2026>

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All correspondence and submissions should be emailed to: [anzshm@anzshm.org.au](mailto:anzshm@anzshm.org.au).

Please include the word 'newsletter' in the subject line of any submissions.

LETTERS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND ARTICLES ARE WELCOME IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE IS **1 FEBRUARY 2025**

For the latest information, visit the ANZSHM website: [www.anzshm.org.au](http://www.anzshm.org.au)