AUCKLAND MEDICAL HISTORY SOCIETY

2026 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Activities during 2026

The programme for 2026 has included an array of topics across the broad spectrum of the history of medicine, each delivered by experts in their fields. I wish to thank David Black and other members of the Executive for their efforts to ensure a balanced and interesting programme with engaging speakers. David will be pleased to receive suggestions from members about potential future topics and speakers.

Ernest and Marion Davis Library (EMDL)

Some members have raised questions about the location of the AMHS meetings at the EMDL, and their timing. Each of these has been carefully considered by the Executive Committee. While it is acknowledged that access to the EMDL may involve challenges for members, the ambience of the building with its historic displays and collections is very conducive to meetings which focus on history. In addition, the facilities including the recently upgraded audiovisual equipment are ideally suited to our needs. The EMDL management, Curators Claire Freeman and Celia Walker, Librarian Victoria Bell, and Michael Boyle, greatly support and facilitate our meetings.

The committee considered proposed alternatives including the School of Meical and Health Sciences, as well as the timing of our meetings, but each of these has its own challenges. Following discussion, it was agreed to continue with the current arrangements. Special thanks to those just mentioned, and to Michael Boyle, whose presence at our meetings ensures their success.

AHMS Executive

In common with other volunteer groups in the community, finding those willing to join the AMHS Executive Committee and contribute to its workings, continues to be a major challenge. Although this is not new, it has now become more urgent for the survival of the AMHS into the future. Please consider joining the committee. I want to thank each member of the Executive Committee for their individual contributions, and Judy Murphy for her ongoing and efficient management of the website.

The future of the AMHS

THE AMHS was founded in 1964 for "the promotion of an interest in and knowledge of medical history through lectures, discussions, exhibitions and other means." Since its foundation, the Society has provided a forum for those interested in the history of medicine to share in these various activities. During this same period, significant changes have occurred in the international study of medical history. The previous focus was limited to the contributions of historic medical practitioners or "famous men" with little or no attention given to patients' stories and experiences. This was changed through the rise of social historians in the 1960's, whose studies have contributed enormously to a broader understanding of medical history.

The AMHS is the only society in Auckland which caters for those with an interest in this subject. It must therefore expand its horizons and seek to recruit members from

both within and outside the various healthcare professions and include academic historians and other persons with an interest in this field. The programme for 2027 will reflect this vision. 2027 is the bicentenary of the birth of Joseph Lister whose introduction of antisepsis revolutionised the practice of surgery. It is the Executive's aim to organise a multidisciplinary symposium which examines this historical milestone, as well as presentations on the historical developments in medical imaging, the management of leg ulcers, the major contributions to the management of pancreatitis by local researchers, and our usual involvement of medical students. The programme for 2027 will be circulated before the end of this year.

Discussions are currently taking place with the Dean of the School of Medicine and Health Sciences on a proposed combined AMHS/FMHS symposium on indigenous health, focusing on the ongoing challenges of rheumatic fever, and innovations in cardiac valve developments and replacement. July 2028 will be the 50th anniversary of the birth of Louise Brown - the first IVF baby. To celebrate this milestone, the AMHS plans to organise a symposium focusing on *Optimising natural fertility and assisted reproductive technology (ART).*

The Executive of the AMHS has had extensive discussions about securing the future of the Society and will shortly circulate members with a questionnaire seeking your views. This has been prepared by Jocelyn Peach. Please respond as your opinions and suggestions are vitally important. One aspect of this is our desire to re-establish formal membership of the AMHS and a moderate annual subscription to provide the ongoing funds necessary to run the Society. Efforts to solicit voluntary donations has not been successful.

John Collins, MNZM

President AMHS
28 October 2026