

Directory of History of Medicine Collections

Organization Name: Museum Victoria Medicine in Society Collection

Organization Type: Museum

Address: Carlton Gardens, Carlton GPO Box 666E

City: Melbourne, Victoria

State/Province:

Zip/Postal Code: 3001

Country: Australia

Telephone Number: 3 8341 7777

Fax Number: +61 3 8341 7778

Web Site: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/>

Online Catalog:

Other: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/collections-research/>

Abstract: OVERVIEW: Through research, collection development and documentation, the Medicine in Society collection aims to: Reflect historical and contemporary medicine in the state of Victoria within Australia; Raise awareness of medical practice, past and present; Examine scientific, social and cultural factors which effect our definitions of human identity and human life; and Research historical and contemporary health issues and facilitate their debate. SUMMARY OF COLLECTION: The Medicine in Society collection currently consists of 3,300 objects that broadly outline the changes in medical practice and research in the state of Victoria over the last 150 years. The collection tells stories of medicine and science in the context of social history. It reflects Victorian historical and contemporary medical practice in the context of the health issues and attitudes of its time. Collection Definition: The Medicine in Society collection consists of objects that describe the areas of health, medicine and human biology. The medical collection is diverse; it covers the areas of scientific research, personal and professional instruments of medical practice as well as objects relating to public health and its promotion. The collection sits within the wider Technology collection.

Holdings: COLLECTION HISTORY: One of the first medicine-related objects acquired by Museum Victoria in 1916 was an x-ray tube donated by a medical practitioner. The Preventive Medicine Exhibits at the Swanston Walk campus (1949 - 1985) gave a public health focus that was thematic rather than collection-centered. Interestingly, these exhibits demonstrate that Museum Victoria has had a long-term commitment to communicating public health issues. Significant periods of collection growth occurred during 1930-39, 1950-59, and particularly 1980 onwards. In the 1980s the collection was curated by Geoff Holden, Curator of Electronics, and Richard Gillespie, Curator of History of Technology. Much of their collecting was responsive to offers of donation and added many important objects to the collection. The Materials exhibition at Scienceworks included a variety of medical prosthetics. In 1933 it was estimated that the medical collection as it sat under technology had 722 objects, with a variety of other related objects sitting under the primary classification of x-ray equipment and microscopes. In the 1990s the primary aim was to develop exhibitions for the new Mind and Body Gallery at Melbourne Museum, as well as Stayin' Alive for Scienceworks. Significant objects such as the iron-lung machine and a renal dialysis machine were acquired. Active collecting for the exhibition Biotech & Beyond has significantly added to the already established prosthetics collection. The medical ephemera collection provides a snap-shot of Victorian medical campaigns and issues that have been in the public eye in the late 1990s-early 2000. In 2004 the internationally significant Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (CSL) collection finally made its home at Museum Victoria. Scope of Existing Collection: The Medical Collection now includes close to 3,300 objects within the wider Technology collection. It ranges from tiny surgical instruments to large items such as an iron lung machine. It takes in items such as dental and surgical instruments, medical ephemera, health campaign paraphernalia, food models, prostheses, pharmacy furniture, medicinal herbs and psychiatric items. They are predominantly objects associated

with Western medical culture. The current medical collection categories are: alternative medicine; bacteriology (microbiology, infectious disease); biotechnology; dentistry; dietetics (food models) documentary material; domestic medicine (personal effects, domestic remedies); first aid; medical technology (diagnostics, imaging, microscopy); medicine (clinical, general practise, surgery, reproductive); mental health (psychology, psychiatry) nursing (hospital and nursing equipment); optometry pharmacy (pharmacy and pharmaceuticals) prosthetics; public health and ephemera research (laboratory equipment) veterinary medicine. Medicine-related objects are also found under the following Museum Victoria collection categories: Microscopy; Communications / Hearing Aids and Royal Flying Doctor Service; Trade Literature; Economic Botany collection / medicinals and drugs; Documents and Multimedia / Beckett collection, occupational health, public health; Physics / Electron microscope and x-rays; Psychiatric Services collection Numismatics. Significance of Existing Collection: Museum Victoria's Medical Collection is a collection of both national and international significance. It is not a comprehensive collection, yet it tells many important Australian stories of medicine, medical research and public health that have had, at times, significant international impact. Key objects include: General medical and surgical equipment used by Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop (1950-1990) after the Second World War Sir Edward was a surgeon in the Australian Army during World War Two and his care of soldiers that were taken prisoner by the Japanese to build the Burma-Thailand railway is legendary. After the war, Sir Edward continued to work as a surgeon in Australia, and Asia, in his own indefatigable heroic style. Research equipment and medicinal samples from the internationally significant Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (CSL) (1918-1984). The Australian institution, CSL, conducted ground-breaking work in the research and manufacture of medicines for use in public health; these include penicillin, anti-venoms and vaccines. A 19th century wooden medicine chest with compartments containing a range of pharmaceuticals. It has been suggested that the chest was used at sea and may have belonged to a Sea Captain or a Ship's Surgeon. It provides insight into 19th century western medical and pharmaceutical practices of the time, as well as the type of medical services provided during sea travel. A selection of prostheses from the early 20th century to the present; representing those that are worn internally (pacemakers, heart valves) and externally (prosthetic arm and leg). Many have been designed and manufactured in Australia. A range of out-moded 19th century medical equipment including a blood-letting instrument, pill-making slabs and rollers, a powder stretcher and straightjackets. A comprehensive collection of equipment from the Polack dental surgery in Melbourne (1930-1985). It includes teeth-cleaning powders, samples of false teeth, anaesthesia equipment and various dental instruments. A collection of equipment from the Whitehead medical practice in Melbourne (1935-1986). It includes a circumcision clamp, mouth gags and catheters, as well as a variety of gynaecological devices such as uterine curettes, a vaginal speculum, midwifery forceps and douche. A selection of Preventative Medicine Exhibition models from the Science Museum (1940-1960), including a mosquito model for the Malaria exhibit (1949), and models of penicillin growing in a culture dish, antibiotic action against bacterial growth, a house fly and a variety of food models for a display on dietetics. An example of the Australian innovation, the cochlear implant (bionic ear) developed by Graeme Clark. A selection of some of the first lithium-powered pacemakers in the world, developed by Australian scientists at Teletronics and Medtronic. A selection of objects demonstrating contemporary uses of biotechnology in medicine. These include a mounted mini-pig specimen, which has been genetically engineered in the hope that its tissues could be utilised in xenotransplantation. There is also a variety of genetically-engineered biopharmaceuticals such as insulin and genotropin (human growth hormone). The first DNA sequencer used in Australia, the ABI 370 was originally purchased in the late 1980s to sequence malarial genes in order to determine what makes the parasite so pathogenic. This early work may in fact lead to the development of a malaria vaccine, which is currently being trialed. An August 2002 issue of Nature reported that groundbreaking research on a malaria toxin could lead to the development of an effective vaccine for the deadly disease.

Collection Subject Strengths: History of Hospitals; History of Medicine; History of Nursing; History of Ophthalmology and Optometry; History of Pharmacology and Pharmacy; History of Psychiatry; History of Public Health; History of Stomatology

Other Collection Subject Strengths: History of Medical Devices

Institution Contact: Dr. Nurin Veis

Institution Title: Senior Curator of Human Biology and Medicine

Email Address: nveis@museum.vic.gov.au

Contact Email Address: rleveson@museum.vic.gov.au

Contact Telephone Number: +61 3 8341 7777

Contact Name: Ruth Leveson