

In the Beginning: A history of the Medical Unit at Auckland Hospital and the formative years of the Department of Medicine

David Richmond, Thomas Miller and Judy Murphy

Reviewed by **Phillippa Poole** BSc, MD, FRACP

This book is an account of the years from 1959 to 1999, during which time the University Department of Medicine evolved from the Medical Unit at Auckland Hospital. Professor Derek North led this transition, going on to become the inaugural Head of Department in the newly established Auckland School of Medicine. He was succeeded by Professors John Scott and Norman Sharpe. The book is largely a testament to the leadership and vision of these men, each of whom have made a huge contribution to New Zealand (NZ) medical practice, research, and education.

All three authors worked in the Department of Medicine for years, which no doubt has helped them compile 30 intensely personal reflections from key medical, nursing, research and administrative staff. In addition to the past Heads and the three authors, offerings came from Kaye Ibbertson, Cam Maclaurin, Ian Holdaway, Ross Howie, Peter Doak and Graham Woodfield, among others. This is one of the most appealing sections of the book.

While there are inevitably some overlaps in the anecdotes, together the accounts create a rich picture of a dynamic and collaborative working environment, where all members of the team felt they contributed to the successes of the unit. What shines through most are the attributes of curiosity, persistence, leadership, multidisciplinary team work, and dedication to excellence in patient care, education and research. One of the main themes of the book is the evolution of medicine in NZ through description of technologies and treatments in renal dialysis and transplant, endocri-

nology, cardiology and haematology, including a description of NZ's first bone marrow transplant. From my perspective as a medical educator who is now the sixth Head of Department, one of the most fascinating aspects was the diversity of the individuals and their paths to success.

The book is attractive, easy to read, and interspersed with photos, but a little heavy to hold easily in one hand. It will appeal to several groups of people. First, if you had any interactions with the key players, whether as a student or colleague, you may enjoy meeting them again in a different guise. Second, if you are nostalgic for the halcyon days before computers and managerialism reigned, you may feel reinvigorated in your efforts to (re-)instill the core values expressed into your practice. Finally, if you have an interest in NZ medical history and the broader social context in the latter half of the twentieth century, you will find many gems in the 427 pages.

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The books cost \$35 each (or \$40 with postage) and are available from Tom Miller (t.miller@auckland.ac.nz) or online booksellers.

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