

# 13<sup>th</sup> COWLISHAW SYMPOSIUM

*Presentations from a Rare Book Collection*



Royal Australasian  
**College of Surgeons**

Saturday 26 July 2025

Royal Australasian College of Surgeons  
250-290 Spring Street, East Melbourne, Victoria



*Disruption* at the  
**13<sup>th</sup> Cowlshaw Symposium**  
Presentations from a Medical Rare Book Collection



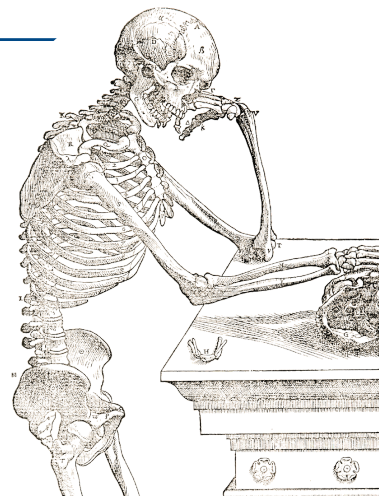
*The Cowlshaw Library*  
*A RACS Rare Book Collection*

# 2025 Cowlshaw Symposium Program

Time	Speaker
9.00am–10.00am	Registration and viewing of Cowlshaw Collection curated displays
10.00am	<b>Introduction and Welcome</b> Dr Su Mei Hoh, FRACS <i>2025 Cowlshaw Symposium Convener welcome</i>
10.10am	Prof Owen Ung, FRACS - RACS President <i>RACS and honouring medical history</i>
10.20am	Prof Chris Browne, Director Melbourne Rare Book Week <i>Celebrating Melbourne Rare Book Week</i>
10.30am	Prof Spencer W Beasley, ONZM FRACS <i>The Cowlshaw library and symposium – in which lies wisdom, historical perspective, our heritage and the antithesis of disruption.</i>
10.45am	<b>Session 1</b> <b>Kenneth Fitzpatrick Russell Memorial Lecture</b> Assoc Prof Felix Behan, AM FRACS <i>Disruption – A focus on the plague</i>
11.30am	Prof Spencer W Beasley, ONZM FRACS <i>Disruptive events in history and the consequences of epidemics</i>
12noon–1.15pm	Light lunch and viewing of Cowlshaw Collection curated displays

# 2025 Cowlishaw Symposium Program

Time	Speaker
1.15pm	<b>Session 2</b> Prof John Royle, OAM FRACS <i>Celsus and Remmelin</i>
1.45pm	Assoc Prof Jenepher Martin, FRACS <i>'He put his hand upon them and healed them'</i> (Gospel St Luke 4:40) – of Morbus Regius and golden angels.
2.15pm	Assoc Prof Saleh Abbas, FRACS <i>Al-Zahrawi – A Muslim Andalusian Scientist and the father of modern surgery</i>
2.45pm – 3.15pm	Afternoon tea
3.15pm	<b>Session 3</b> Assoc Prof Michael Hollands, AM FRACS <i>Andreas Vesalius – The great disruptor</i>
3.45pm	Dr Alison Browning, FRACS <i>Child of spleen - form, function and mystery in the left upper quadrant</i>
4.15pm	Dr Marli Williams, FRACS <i>The original wellness influencer</i>
4.45pm	Closing remarks



# Convener's Forward



Welcome to the 2025 Cowlshaw Symposium!

This is the thirteenth symposium since its inception in 1996 and the first after a six-year hiatus. The interruption to the program was due to the COVID-19 pandemic which saw the cancellation of the 2020 meeting. Post-pandemic the symposium was planned for a comeback in 2023 but was postponed due to sustainability measures at RACS.

Today, I am proud to present to you a program that has been three years in the making. When we were planning the 2023 meeting, I had the idea to speak to a theme of 'Disruption' in the wake of a global pandemic. When our symposium was cancelled on a background of wider College challenges, the theme became all the more relevant.

The return of this symposium stands as a testament to the enduring significance of our past. Meetings like this offer a unique platform for us to delve into the evolution of medical thought and practice through the lens of rare historic works united in one extraordinary library by Leslie Cowlshaw.

The timing of the symposium has also changed this year to allow our inaugural participation in the Melbourne Rare Book Week. We are excited about this new partnership and are looking forward to exploring our joint literary heritage.

I trust you will enjoy this meeting as much as I have in watching the program come together. I also hope this provides for an opportunity for reflection on our unique heritage as our College approaches its centenary in 2027.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Su Mei Hoh".

Dr Su Mei Hoh, FRACS  
Cowlshaw Symposium Convener 2025

The 2025 Cowlshaw Symposium sees its inaugural participation in the  
**Melbourne Rare Book Week**, 24 July – 2 August 2025.



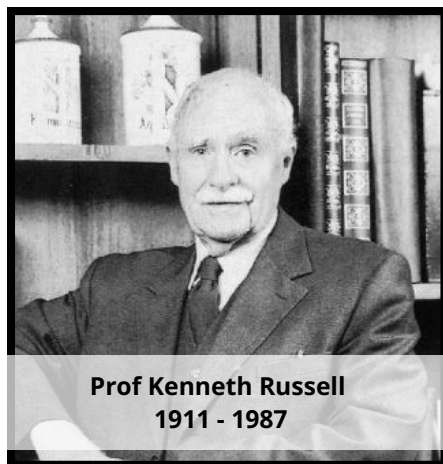
For the love of books

Melbourne Rare Book Week (MRBW) was founded and co-convened in 2012 by Kay Craddock and Jonathan Burdon, two leading Melbourne book dealers. Since that time, it has been built up to a scale of 40 - 50 free book-related events, held in July as a lead-in to the annual Melbourne Rare Book Fair. Since 2017, Chris Browne has been Program Director for MRBW succeeding Kay and Jonathan.

MRBW is a major event for book collectors, librarians and all who have a love of words, print on paper and literary heritage. It attracts local, interstate and international visitors to the City of Melbourne to celebrate and enjoy all aspects of print on paper. All events associated with MRBW, including the annual Melbourne Rare Book Fair, are free entry to the public.

Following the success in Melbourne, similar 'Rare Book Weeks' are now held annually in London, New York, California and Boston, featuring book fairs, auctions, exhibitions, and other events.

# Acknowledgements



RACS acknowledges the people who have contributed to the Cowlshaw Symposium. We thank the presenters that have spent many hours researching topics and preparing their papers.

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**Convener:** Dr Su Mei Hoh, FRACS

**Masters of Ceremonies:** Prof Chris Pyke, FRACS and Dr Pamela Caleo, FRACS

**Presenters:** Prof Spencer W Beasley, ONZM FRACS  
Assoc Prof Felix Behan AM, FRACS  
Prof John Royle, OAM FRACS  
Assoc Prof Jenepher Martin, FRACS  
Assoc Prof Saleh Abbas, FRACS  
Dr Marli Williams, FRACS  
Assoc Prof Michael Hollands, AM FRACS  
Dr Alison Browning, FRACS

**RACS Curator:** Ms Helen Laffin

**RACS Archivist:** Ms Elizabeth Milford

**Symposium Subcommittee:** Dr Jancke Maritz and Dr Tom Neerhut

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## **The Cowlshaw library and symposium: In which lies wisdom, historical perspective, our heritage and the antithesis of disruption.**

The story of the Cowlshaw library and symposium is founded mainly on the vision, passion and determination of five Fellows of our College, whose achievements have allowed us to celebrate one of the finest collections of rare and significant medical and surgical books, most of which were printed between 1479 and 1850.

Gordon Craig, a strong proponent of our College and on its first Council in 1927, bequeathed a considerable sum to our College that was used to build the library that now bears his name. Leslie Cowlshaw, according to Sir William Osler “the bibliophile from the bush” and an avid medical historian, spent the rest of his life tracking down and acquiring many of the most significant rare and historic books found in Europe. When he died, he offered his collection to the RACP but they equivocated.

John Laidley first saw an opportunity that would benefit our College and initiated a series of rapid events that led to RACS being able to purchase the collection. Kenneth Russell then moved quickly to ensure the College was able to acquire the approximately 1800 books. Not satisfied with that he spent many years meticulously cataloguing; and that culminated in the publication “Historical Books of the Library of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons” in 1979. This detailed catalogue remains the key reference for all who wish to explore the books of the Cowlshaw Collection.

Wyn Beasley, appointed by Council as Reader of the Cowlshaw Collection, realised that the true value of the collection could only be realised if its existence and contents were actively promoted. His vision led to the first Cowlshaw symposium being held at the College in October 1996.

Of course, far more players than these five have contributed enormously in different ways, whether it be as curators of the library or presenters at the symposia. But they all have one thing in common: they have recognised the inherent value of these books, their historical context and the wisdom that they still contain for us. This symposium is a celebration of the fine intellect, courage, insight and wisdom of those before us – and a strong reminder that even old texts have perpetual value and relevance to today's world.

# Kenneth Fitzpatrick Russell Memorial Lecture

The Kenneth Fitzpatrick Russell Memorial Lecture was established in 1991 to commemorate Professor Kenneth Russell for his outstanding contributions to scholarship in the history of medicine and surgery. Professor Russell played an instrumental role in the acquisition of the Cowlshaw Collection and was Reader to the RACS Gordon Craig Library from 1945 to 1987.

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- 2025** Assoc Prof Felix Behan, AM FRACS  
*Disruption – A focus on the plague*
- 2018** Assoc Prof Susan Neuhaus, AM FRACS  
*1783 - Anatomy of a Duel*
- 2016** Dr Peter Burke, FRACS  
*Matthew Baillie's Morbid Anatomy, its Sequel and the Melbourne 'Connexion'*
- 2014** Prof A. Wyn Beasley, CNZM FRACS  
*A Dram wi' the Monros*
- 2012** Prof Gordon Low, AM FRACS  
*Paintings from the Cushing-Whitney Medical Library of Yale University*
- 2010** Dr Philip Sharp, FRACS  
*Harmen Boerhaave – 'The Dutch Hippocrates'*
- 2008** Dr Marius Fahrer, FRACS  
*The Life and Times of Ambroise Paré*
- 2006** Prof A. Wyn Beasley, CNZM FRACS  
*An Approach to the Natural*
- 2004** Hon Prof S.A. (Sam) Mellick, CBE FRACS  
*Of Books and Libraries*
- 2002** Prof Alan J. Thurston, FRACS  
*Dupuytren's Disease or Cooper's Contracture?*
- 2000** Prof Donald A. Simpson, AO FRACS  
*The English Roots of Medical Education in Australasia*
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# Kenneth Fitzpatrick Russell Memorial Lecture

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- 1998** Prof A. Wyn Beasley, CNZM FRACS  
*A Web of Words: Kipling and his Friends*
- 1996** Prof John H. Pearn, FRACS  
*Nom et Lumière*
- 1994** Dr R. Andrew Cuthbertson, FRACS  
*Haemophilia: Historical and Molecular Perspectives*
- 1991** Prof Harold Attwood,  
*Kenneth Russell - Medical Historian, Matthew Baillie's Atlas of Engravings and Samuel Johnson's Lung*
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## Disruption – A focus on the plague

Assoc Prof Felix Behan AM, FRACS

In my interpretation of the word **DISRUPTION**, the nominated title for my talk, I have used a certain licence to incorporate disruptions from an historical perspective reflecting the effects of the Black Death over this period. I have used the reference book from the Cowlshaw Collection by **Hecker** titled ***The Black Death in the 14th Century*** fulfilling the regulations of any Cowlshaw presentation that a book from the collection be the focus for any presentation. Thus, having fulfilled such obligations, admittedly with a bit of artistic licence on the meaning of this word as I have applied it to the present day and the COVID-19 epidemic and still worth recounting. Let us not forget that the Spanish Flu of 1918-1919 killed 50-100 million people worldwide. In 2023 on submission of this abstract, the WHO had reported COVID-19 had killed 6.9 million around the world. We did not have WHO in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century to supply such accurate details then but how meritorious from the German author mirroring that German characteristic of recording details is still evident as part of history, thankfully. The Black Death is all embracing in its implications and its effect on society – wiping out millions like COVID-19.

The disruption caused by the Black Death in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century led to the Great Fire of London in the 1660s and Samuel Pepys it gives a comprehensive view of the disruption that has occurred in society over the centuries. When I think of the past 3-5 years and the COVID-19 problems we have had causing clinical and social disruption culminating in the present WHO data was formerly covered by Hecker historically in recollection of what occurred during the periods of the Black Death in Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. Thus, I have synthesised these findings being the basis for this presentation and I will cover the history of Black Death from various perspectives past and present. Incidentally, my articles in Surgical News can also be resurfaced during the presentation on world pandemics as I tapped into various sources then to compile these dissertations, including the New York Times.

### References:

Hecker, J.F.C. *The black death in the fourteenth Century*. London, 1833  
(Translated by B.G. Babington)

# Kenneth Fitzpatrick Russell Memorial Lecture

## **Assoc Prof Felix Behan AM, FRACS**



Assoc Prof Felix Behan, AM is a Plastic and Reconstructive surgeon. Training in London at St George's, Royal Marsden and Westminster Hospitals, Felix joined the faculty of Head and Neck surgery at Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute in 1977-2014, establishing the Melanoma Unit there. Concurrently he was Head of Unit Plastic & Reconstructive Hand Surgery at the Western Hospital from 1988, establishing an international hand surgery career.

Felix pioneered the Keystone Perforator Island Flap (ANZJS 2003) leading to 33 published peer reviewed articles and 4 textbooks with 2 in press. Assoc Prof Behan has a strong interest in surgical history and is a regular contributor to Surgical News. In 2024 Assoc Prof Behan was recognised as a member of the Order of Australia (AM) for significant service to medicine, in particular reconstructive surgery.

## Disruptive events in history and the consequences of epidemics

Prof Spencer W Beasley, ONZM FRACS

Every year sees methods of treatment tried over again which were tried and found wanting many years before, and fresh discoveries vaunted which are only rediscovered ..... arises out of ignorance of what has been accomplished before." Leslie Cowlshaw

Cowlshaw, a Fellow of RACS well-informed about the content of earlier scientific and medical publications, reminds us of the value of making ourselves familiar with the knowledge of our predecessors. We may find their wisdom applicable today.

The recent disruption caused by Covid and the international response to it, gives us an opportunity to review what happened when the much worse plague, the Black Death, was rampant as it decimated Europe from 1347-1351, wiping out whole communities and killing 30-60% of the population. Often, there were not enough people alive to bury the dead. Compare this with the about 0.1% overall mortality of Covid from late 2019. Both events resulted in major disruption to almost every aspect of human existence.

The three books chosen from the Cowlshaw Collection were printed in 1720-21, about 370 years after the Black Death first swept through the continent, at a time when further unpredictable but horrific outbreaks were still annihilating Europe's greatest cities. Deaths were not limited to the *Yersinia pestis*; starvation, malnutrition and murders instigated by fear and ignorance added to the misery. It is not surprising that Richard Bradley was keen that the plague's destruction of Marseilles in 1720 would not be repeated in London, having himself survived the 1665 "Great Plague of London". Like Richard Mead and Richard Blackmore, he was keen to determine "the most effective means to prevent the spread of the contagion". Blackmore explained that the English have the "same fears and apprehension of danger [as Europeans and] are using all just precautions to hinder their being visited by such a sore calamity [and guard their coastline to prevent] open or clandestine trade".

# Session 1: Abstracts

The books focus on what was then known about the causes and spread of the plague, its symptoms and prognosis, and how it could be contained once present. They contain descriptions of the devastation it caused people and their communities. They also attempted to evaluate which remedies worked and to distinguish them from those that did not. The advice and guidance that they worked out so meticulously still apply today, albeit with some contextual differences. They recognised the importance of washing hands, precautions when handling contaminated material, the value of quarantine, abandoning the streets (now read: lockdowns), limiting travel between cities and countries, and even of misinformation (or ignorance) around unproven remedies. (On top of that, the role of poor sanitation, impure water and the poor being worse affected is outlined).

When the population is exposed to the disease, the main difference between the prospects then and what we see now is reflected in societal expectations. There has been a shift from “wait for those who are susceptible to the disease to die from it, or wait for the epidemic to move on” (at a time when there was no cure or vaccine, and little hope) to what we have now: “isolate and wait until a vaccine becomes available, or mutations occur that render the disease less dangerous” (a lot more hope).

Aside from advances in medicine and vaccines, everything our Cowlshaw authors advised in 1720 is still pertinent in 2025.

## References:

Bradley, Richard *The plague at Marseilles consider'd* with some remarks upon the plague in general. London, 1721

Blackmore, Sir Richard *A discourse upon the plague with a preparatory account of malignant fevers*. London, 1721

Mead, Richard. In: "The Free Thinker", *Considerations on the Nature, Causes, Cure and prevention of Pestilence*. London, 1721.

### Celsus and R Emmelin

Prof John Royle, OAM FRACS

The two rarest books in the Cowlshaw Collection are the volumes of Celsus and R Emmelin. Celsus wrote *De medicina* in the first century AD. It was an 8 volume compendium of medical knowledge at that time. Two volumes were devoted to surgery. The work first appeared in printed form in 1478. Our copy is from a later edition (the second) published in 1493. What makes our copy so rare is that it is the printer's proof.

Johann R Emmelin, a German physician, first published his *Catoptrum Microcosmicum* in Latin in 1613 with the famous illustrations only. Two years later he published it with a lengthy accompanying text. The book is remarkable because it was the first to show the anatomy of the human body in fold out flaps. There are only four pages, but the flaps make up 120 pages in total.

The book was translated into French, German, English and Japanese. Our copy is from the first edition produced in English. Because of the frailty of the fold out pages there are very few intact copies still in existence.

#### References:

Celsus, Aurelius Cornelius, *De medicina*. Venice, 1493

R Emmelin, Johann, *A survey of the microcosme. Or the anatomie of the bodies of man and woman*. London, 1675



## Session 2: Abstracts

### ***'He put his hand upon them and healed them' (Gospel St Luke 4:40) – of Morbus Regius and golden angels.***

Assoc Prof Jenepher Martin, FRACS

The Cowlshaw Collection includes two books by William Beckett, Russell's catalogue noting simply that 'Beckett practised surgery in London'. One, predictably, is a book of 'practical surgery'. Beckett was, however, more complex than simply a practising surgeon, with a well-developed interest in history and active as a Fellow of the Royal Society.

The other book, discussed in this paper, was published in 1722 and presents Beckett's historical research into the Royal Touch for healing as practiced by British Kings and Queens. The book was published in 1722, printed and sold by J. Peele Locke's Head in Paternoster Row. The title page tells us that the contents include two letters written to physicians who are also Fellows of the Royal Society and an additional collection of source material. Beckett also provides context and motivation for publishing the letters.

The paper will explore the historical and societal context of this publication, the developing medical knowledge of the time, modern medical perspectives of Morbus Regius, and how despite scientific advances the practice of natural magic related to the Royal touch persisted.

#### **References:**

Beckett, William 1684-1738 *A free and impartial enquiry into the antiquity and efficacy of touching for the cure of the King's Evil....* To which is added a collection of records.  
LONDON: J. Peele, 1722 8vo (C 47)

### **'Al-Zahrawi – A Muslim Andalusian Scientist and the father of modern surgery**

Assoc Prof Saleh Abbas, FRACS

Abu al-Qasim Al-Zahrawi, (936 AD to 1013 AD)

His name is Abu al-Qasim Khalaf bin Abbas Al-Zahrawi, in relation to his birth in the city of Al-Zahra, which was built by the Umayyuu Al-Andalus to the northwest of the city of Cordoba, a Muslim Andalusian scientist and surgeon and doctor, known by Europeans as Abu al-Qasim. He was one of the greatest Arab surgeons and one of their greatest doctors, and called the father of modern surgery with Westerners who inherited Arab medicine on a day when there was no other medicine in the whole world in its time, according the British Knowledge Circle. He was the doctor of Prince Abdul Rahman III, known as Nasser. Al-Zahrawi was the first surgeon to use the threads of (CatGut).

His fame dates back to his book "Al-tasrif for those who were unable to author", an encyclopedia of various medical knowledge of his time, it was 1500 pages that examined internal medicine, food, chemistry and surgery. He contributed to the publication of Arabic surgery in all European countries after being translated into Latin by Gerard Cremona in Toledo in the 12th century AD. Al-Zahrawi was not only a skilled surgeon, but a doctor with extensive experience. He singled out an important section of his book in surgery for diseases of the eye, ear and throat, an important section for diseases of the teeth, gums and tongue, gynaecological diseases and the art of childbirth and midwifery, and a complete section for treatment of jaw fractures. He was the first to discover and describe haemophilia. His influence was great in Europe, as he translated his books into many languages, and studied at its universities. European surgeons followed him, and quoted him very often. His book was a reference of physicians of Europe from the early 15th century to the late 18th century. He insisted on starting the autopsy as a means to understand anatomy and as a necessity to learn surgery. It is narrated that he was standing behind a light veil, and giving his appropriate guidance to midwives in managing difficult births.

Al-Zahrawi has created more than a hundred surgical instruments that he designed himself. He used heat cautery to treat cancers. He also was the first to suggest the ligation of bleeding arteries and veins and using of pressure to control oozing. He also used cautery but due to the lack of electricity at that time, the heater was used, heating a piece of metal and placing it on the affected area, also used freezing the tissue and stopping bleeding. He thus preceded the famous French surgeon Ambrois Paré (one of the doctors of the 16th century and the doctor of the kings of France at the time). Al-Zahrawi was the first to perform the method of lithotomy in women by vagina, the first to use special machines to expand the cervix, and the first to invent a special instruments for gynaecological examination that is still to this day. He also described varicose veins surgery, and about hernia surgery.

## Session 2: Abstracts

He described the treatment of wounds caused by cutting a sword, knife stabs. He talked about head surgeries and accompanying bone fractures and nerve damage, and about neck, chest, abdomen and intestines and suturing surgery for injuries. He also described amputation of limbs threatened by gangrene. He was the first to use gold and silver dental bridges and dental compression instruments, and succeeded in treating jaw deformities and orthodontics using surgical instruments he created for this purpose.

The famous French surgeon Guy de Chauliac also used many of his ideas and cited his opinions more than two hundred times.

His book "al-tasreef" or "Methods in Medicine" which is located in thirty volumes looks at the diseases of the whole body, but the most important is the thirty articles related to surgeries, which earned him the title of "the father of surgery" of his time, decorated with drawings described by the surgical tools that he designed himself. There are other books by Al-Zahrawi, such as the book "The Light of the Eye" in Ophthalmology, "The Interpretation of Irons and Weights". He also described the first syringe and needle made of silver. He had pioneered the first use of anaesthesia using a sponge soaked with opium and cannabis.

### References:

Albucasis (Khalaf ibn Abbas abu'l-Qasim al-Zahrawi) *Albucasis chirurgicorum omnium primarii, lib. Tres.1. De cauterio..II. De sectione and perforatione,phlebotomia and ventonisis, III De restauratione and curatione dislocationis and membrorum.* c 912 – 1013.

# Session 3: Abstracts

## Andreas Vesalius – The great disruptor

Assoc Prof Michael Hollands, AM FRACS

*De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem* was first published in 1543. Whilst not the first anatomical text, it was the first empirical study of human anatomy. Why was it the great disruptor?

Mondino di Luzzi, in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century had published *Anathomia Corporis Humani* which was to prove the preferred anatomical text for 250 years. The *Anathomia* however is a handbook to describe the process of dissection. Whilst Mondino references his personal observations his commentary is often superficial and fails to reference his observations to those of earlier anatomists hence perpetuating Galenic theory.

Vesalius' text was based on direct observation of dissected human cadavers, it highlighted disparities between those observations and accepted galenic teaching. Galen had based his findings on dissections of pigs and apes. His use of animals to support his anatomical findings had gone largely unrecognised and was reinforced by the prohibition of human dissection.

Vesalius' credibility was enhanced by his direct involvement in the dissection enabling him to personally observe and report his findings. In his book Vesalius questioned Galen's findings, proving some incorrect and doubting the veracity of others. Interestingly, errors in the anatomy of pregnancy can be attributed to Vesalius' lack of opportunity to dissect cadavers of pregnant women and his reliance on Galenic observations.

In my opinion *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* changed scientific process by demanding that theory be supported by direct observation (and later by experimentation) rather than relying on assumption.

### References:

Vesalius, Andreas, *De Fabrica* - Second edition, Basel, Johannem Oporinum (Johannes Oporinus). 1555 (folio)

Vesalius, Andreas, *De Fabrica* - Third edition, Venice, Apud Franciscum, Franciscum Senessem & Joannem Criegher Germanum. 1568 (folio)

Vesalius, Andreas, *De Fabrica* - German edition, Nuernberg (Nuremberg), Jacob Bauman's abbreviated edition, written in German, 1551 (folio),

Wickersheimer, Ernest, *Anatomies de Mondino dei Luzzi et de Guido de Vigevano*. 1926

### Child of spleen - form, function and mystery in the left upper quadrant

Dr Alison Browning, FRACS

The form of the spleen – its anatomical boundaries, shape, location and blood supply were well described by Galen, and required little updating in Vesalius' works. By contrast, the function of the spleen has been fraught with misunderstanding. Despite promising that his description would break with the orthodox, the description of splenic function in Vesalius' work offers little departure from either Galenic or Aristotelian theory. This challenge to understand the role of the spleen was preserved throughout the world: misallocation of the spleen's role can also be seen in Ayurvedic, ancient Korean and Arabic writings.

Perhaps the spleen's complex anatomy, similar appearance to the liver, and the underlying misapprehensions about the function of the liver led to this persistent confusion.

Such uncertainty proved fertile ground for the spleen to capture the imagination. Copious meanings have been attached to both the organ and the word spleen itself, leading to frequent references in poetry and literature.

This talk will explore the interplay between scientific misunderstanding and fictional expression.

#### References:

Valverde, Juan de Hamusco. *Anatome corporis humani*. Venetiis 1589

Vesalius, Andreas, *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*. Basileae 1555

Pare, A. references to Spigelius, A, *Three tracts of the veins, arteries and nerves*. London 1649

### The original wellness influencer

Dr Marli Williams, FRACS

*A Choice Manuall, or, Rare and Select Secrets in Physick and Chirurgery: Collected, and Practised by the Right Honourable, the Countesse of Kent, Late Deceased* is a small book of recipes both medicinal and later an added section of culinary recipes. Published after her death, it was a popular book with 22 editions published between 1653 and 1726.

Was its popularity boosted by attaching a well-known person to the title, a marketing tactic still used today? Was it its design, small enough to fit in an apron pocket or in a drawer? Or were the cures what the people wanted/needed?

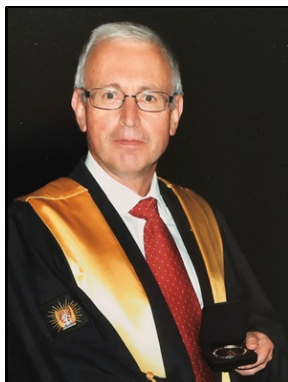
Join me as I attempt to recreate some of the recipes within and explore the influence and controversy this book had over decades.

#### References:

Kent, Countess of (Elizabeth Grey). *A choice manuall, or rare and select secrets in physick and chirurgery: collected and practiced by the right honorable the Countesse of Kent*. London 1655

# Biographical notes

## Prof Spencer W Beasley, ONZM FRACS



Prof Spencer Beasley has been a Paediatric surgeon based in Christchurch New Zealand from 1996, coming from the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne where he worked for almost 13 years. He is the Clinical Director of the Department of Paediatric Surgery, Christchurch as well as the Clinical Lead at Wellington Regional Hospital. He is Professor of Paediatric Surgery, Christchurch School of Medicine, University of Otago. He and his colleagues provide a regional paediatric surgical outreach service to the whole of the South Island and contribute to the lower half of the North Island. Currently, he is the Deputy NZ Censor of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (having been the NZ Censor about 20 years ago). He is a former Vice-President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, and as Chair of its Governance and Advocacy Committee was responsible for the implementation of the Expert Advisory Group recommendations around Discrimination, Bullying and Sexual Harassment (DBSH). He was previously Chair of the RACS Board of Surgical Education and Training, and Chair of Professional Development. He is a former Chair of the Board in Paediatric Surgery and senior examiner in Paediatric surgery, and Chair of the Court of Examiners for three years.

Prof Beasley was instrumental in the development of the RACS *Leadership for surgeons in everyday practice* course. He has been President of the Aotearoa New Zealand Society of Paediatric Surgeons, the Pacific Association of Pediatric Surgeons, and President of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Paediatric Surgeons. He has contributed to the RACS-administered Pacific Island Project, mostly to Vanuatu, for well over a decade. He has authored ten books and about 350 peer-reviewed papers. His late father, Wyn Beasley, a retired Orthopaedic surgeon from Wellington - but at the time an active historian - initiated the Cowlshaw Symposium. Therefore, it is no surprise to learn that Spencer was brought up in a library, the family home.

# Biographical notes

## Prof John Royle, OAM FRACS



Prof John Royle commenced a dedicated commitment to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons in 1972 when he first joined the Board of Examiners. This was followed by a period on the Court of Examiners. Contemporaneously he served on the Victorian State Committee followed by 12 years on Council. When he completed his term as President in 1996, he had given 24 years of continuous services to the College. Spending so much time in the Spring Street building in the 70s and 80s, he became quite knowledgeable about what he likes to call the College Treasures. Sir William Dargie and Paul Fitzgerald (both of whom painted portraits of College presidents) separately visited the College to see the portraits. Ray Champman and John showed them around. John learned a great deal about the portraits from them.

With a small collection of antique silver at home, John was fascinated by the collection housed in cabinets around the College. He obtained from the then RACS archivist the provenance of many of these items. He gave his first talk on the silver, portraits and other artefacts at a Court of Examiners dinner in 1994. He called his talk *Treasures of the College*. He gave other talks on the treasures at Council dinners and a Vascular surgical meeting. John took friends and colleagues on tours of the College, showing the various items in the rooms where they were housed. He studied the background to the Cowlshaw Collection so that he could speak to guests about the magnificent collection in the Council Room. He took the attendees at the inaugural Cowlshaw Symposium in 1996 on a tour of the College Treasures. He produced a booklet entitled *Tours of the College* in 2004 so that others could learn about the background of many of the artefacts and then they could take people on similar tours. Since then we have established a museum, which is now a highlight of tours and displays.



# Biographical notes

## **Assoc Prof Jenepher Martin, FRACS**



Assoc Prof Jenepher Martin is a General surgeon (FRACS 1991) practising in the Breast and Endocrine unit at Eastern Health, Melbourne. She has a career-long academic interest in medical education. Her post-fellowship qualifications include Master of Education (University of Toronto, 1994) and Doctor of Education (The University of Melbourne, 2007). From 2004 – 2010 Jenepher served on RACS Council. Her significant contributions to RACS education, have been recognised by the award of the RACS Medal (2014) and Sir Alan Newton Medal for Surgical Education (2024). Jenepher is currently active in medical education research, program evaluation, and medical regulation. She has appointments with Monash and Deakin universities, committee roles at the Australian Medical Council and is a practitioner member of the Victorian Board, Medical Board of Australia. Medical history and associated historical document analysis is a new challenge.

# Biographical notes

## Assoc Prof Saleh Abbas, FRACS



Assoc Prof Saleh Abbas is a General surgeon who specialises in hepatobiliary and pancreatic surgery. He is an expert in his field of pancreatic and liver cancer surgeries, having performed more than 70 pancreaticoduodenectomies, more than 70 distal pancreatectomies and more than 100 liver resections.

He also performs surgery for cancer of the gallbladder and bile duct as well as providing a wide range of laparoscopic surgery including Upper GI, reflux, adrenals and hernia. Assoc Prof Abbas also performs endoscopic procedures for the lower and upper GI tract. Graduating from Baghdad University in 1987, he is now a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, and he currently has an academic appointment with Deakin University teaching medical students and training our next generation of surgeons.

Saleh is very active in research and has published more than 30 papers in different journals, including Diseases of Colon and Rectum, The British Journal of Surgery and The Cochrane Collaboration.

# Biographical notes

## **Assoc Prof Michael Hollands, AM FRACS**



Assoc Prof Hollands is an is an Upper Gastrointestinal surgeon and completed his early surgical training at St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney. He then travelled overseas, completing his surgical training in the United Kingdom at The Royal Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith and Guys Hospital in London. He then worked at the Harvard Medical School Campus at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston and Queen Mary Hospital, Hong Kong. Since returning to Australia he has worked at Westmead Hospital and is Clinical Associate Professor of Surgery of the Western Clinical School of Sydney University. He has postgraduate training in gastro-oesophageal and hepatopancreatobiliary surgery.

His clinical interests include upper gastrointestinal malignancy, biliary disease and hernia surgery. Michael is a former President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and subsequently, Chairman of the Committee of College Presidents. He has been a member of a number of state and national healthcare related committees including the Australian Medical Council and the National Medical Training Advisory Network. He is currently a member of the Board of Medical Defence Australia and has received a Medal of the Order of Australia. Michael also has an interest in the history of surgery and has a Diploma in the History of Medicine from the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries.

# Biographical notes

## **Dr Alison Browning, FRACS**



Alison Browning is an Upper Gastrointestinal surgery fellow currently working in at Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney. She completed her medical degree at Monash University, including a brief period spent in Italy studying the development of anatomy during the renaissance. She has a PhD in gastric cancer immunology. Following this she completed surgical training in Victoria. She is looking forward to further fellowship in 2026.

# Biographical notes

## Dr Marli Williams, FRACS



Dr Marli Williams is a General and specialist breast surgeon. She completed her General surgery training at Eastern Health in Melbourne and is a full member of Breast Surgeons of Australia and New Zealand.

She works as a consultant surgeon at Eastern Health and Western Health in breast and general surgery and is the Surgical Supervisor of training at the Angliss Hospital. She is also a member of the Victorian State committee of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Younger Fellow representative for Victoria.

In her spare time she likes crafting, roller skating and reading Scandinavian crime novels.





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