



Susan Heydon

New Zealanders, vaccination and health history in the making

Vaccination in New Zealand, who can vaccinate and for what is highly regulated, but a vaccination programme to be successful requires people to be vaccinated. This presentation draws on the projects of a series of Honours pharmacy students. Each used a wide range of primary and secondary sources. The first project in 2018 focused on the history of vaccination in New Zealand and people's attitudes since the earliest smallpox vaccinations and attempts at compulsion. It highlighted the importance of context, specific vaccine and that low immunisation coverage was a longstanding issue in New Zealand. In 2020 the situation was very different. New Zealand was in the grips of the COVID 19 pandemic and attitudes to vaccination had become highly topical. We investigated what was happening as events unfolded and amid the uncertainty of the times, from the situation of no vaccine to vaccines being introduced. The following year mandates requiring vaccination for different sectors of the population were the issue. Smallpox returned to the news. New Zealanders were also weary of the pandemic and its restrictions. My next student focused on boosters and attempts to raise immunisation coverage. She was also Māori. Māori had lower rates and had done so throughout. Although very recent, these projects cumulatively are about health history in the making. These students did not know what was going to happen or which direction should be taken. Each dissertation focused on a key theme that was important at the time, but collectively they tell a story that can get lost in hindsight when we know what happened next.