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Contemporary collecting and Covid-19

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In 2019 a novel coronavirus was identified in the Wuhan region of China. The contagion spread quickly around the globe, and its effects were devastating. By January 2020, the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in Melbourne, Victoria. A month later, the first case was confirmed in New Zealand. Looking back, the closest thing we can identify was the post-World War I influenza pandemic. The 1918-19 influenza pandemic saw hundreds of millions of people infected and somewhere between 17 million and 100 million deaths. The looming threat of Covid-19 altered the professional practice of frontline medical practitioners around the world. It prompted enormous social changes which impacted the ways people interacted with their own families and close personal spheres, it also had profound economic consequences. There were significant professional challenges and changes for anaesthetists and pain medicine specialists. The Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History exists as part of the Australian & New Zealand College of Anaesthetists. The Museum began a project that sought to document the lived experience of anaesthetists at the frontline of the Covid-19 emergency therefore embracing contemporary collecting around medical history. This paper will showcase how this project addressed the purpose of the museum which is to collect, preserve and interpret artefacts of significance to anaesthesia practice, pain medicine, and related specialties to raise their profile within both the medical and non-medical communities. In 2023, ANZCA held its first in-person annual scientific meeting since

before the pandemic. The museum hired a mobile sound recording booth to collect short oral histories and develop an archive of experiential information. Now, as the world feels a little more 'normal', is the perfect time to reflect on those histories and whether they can inform future disaster preparedness, as well as the implications for the health and wellbeing of the professional involved.