



Women and medicine in focus on 2019 International Women's Day

1 March 2019

Some of Australia's leading historians and academics will gather on International Women's Day for a women and medicine symposium hosted by the Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History in Melbourne.

Presenters will explore the historically fraught relationship between women and medicine, both as patients and practitioners, on March 8 at the museum which is housed at the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) in St Kilda Road.

ANZCA is a leader among Australia's medical colleges for taking positive steps to encourage more women to practise medicine and the specialty of anaesthesia. Forty-nine per cent of the college's newly qualified anaesthetists (fellows) are women and the college had four consecutive women presidents between 2008 and 2016. ANZCA also plays a lead role in supporting gender balance at its conferences.

The symposium coincides with the launch of the college's Gender Equity Position Statement and Action Plan with its Faculty of Pain Medicine to achieve visible gender equity across key areas of training, continuing medical education, research, leadership and advocacy.

The symposium features discussions and debate on a wide range of topics including obstetric pain relief, mental health, anatomical collections and the challenges faced by women wanting to practice medicine. It will also feature a session on reproductive crime which was commonplace in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Women appeared regularly before the courts charged with a range of offences including infanticide and baby farming.

Presenters include Associate Professor Paula Michaels from Monash University, Sarah Rood from Way Back When Consulting Historians, Associate Professor Louella McCarthy from the University of Wollongong and Dr Carolyn Rasmussen, independent scholar and Honorary Fellow, University of Melbourne.

The museum's honorary curator Dr Christine Ball and curator Monica Cronin said the symposium was a first for the museum.

"The history of medicine often renders women invisible in both the provision of medical care and in receiving it. The histories discussed at this symposium reveal the complexity of the historical relationship between women and medicine, as both providers and as patients," Dr Ball and Ms Cronin said.

The Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History showcases over 170 years of advances in anaesthesia and pain medicine and is one of the largest and most diverse collections of its type in the world.