

SUMMER RESEARCH 2024/25

PROJECT ABSTRACT



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

PROJECT # 1

SUPERVISOR/S:	Dr Maebh Long
PROJECT TITLE:	Immunity in Aotearoa New Zealand, Immunity in Hamilton
FIELD:	Medical Humanities
DIVISION/SCHOOL:	ALPSS - Te Kura Toi School of Arts
PROJECT LOCATION:	Hamilton

PROJECT ABSTRACT:

My research looks at the ways immunity was presented to the public in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Britain and Ireland from 1890 to 1940. As lay audiences in the late nineteenth century grew to understand the hazards posed by germs, the modern world appeared rife with invisible threats, but gradually advances in immunology gave the public a discourse of bodily resistance. Articles in Aotearoa New Zealand's newspapers reported on medical discoveries in bacteriology and immunology. Brands began to draw on the idea of immunity to evoke a life of complete exemption from illness. Novels utilised the concept of immunity to forge medically infused metaphors of resistance, isolation and protection. In most instances the depiction of immunity, and what we would now call the immune system, was very loosely connected to immunological developments. But as the idea of being immune was – and is – so tied up with ideas of vaccination, health and medical treatment, understanding the powerful, imprecise picture of immunity that newspapers, patent medicine brands and literary fiction gave the public affords us an important background to understandings of immunity and responses to vaccination programmes today.

My summer scholarship student and I will build on my research on public understandings of immunity in New Zealand, placing particular emphasis on local hospital and city connections. We will produce a public-facing display that shows the ways immunity was depicted to the public, outlines local experiences with vaccinations and describes bacteriological research at the hospital.

STUDENT SKILLS:

- Ability to do focused research work and concentrate for sustained periods
- Attention to detail and a commitment to accuracy
- Strong abilities, reflected by good grades, in literature reviews or essay writing
- Some experience in historical research is preferred, but good research skills are transferrable, so students from across the university are encouraged to apply
- An interest in health and medicine is essential, and some experience with health and medicine is preferred, but students from across the university are encouraged to apply.

PROJECT TASKS:

1. Familiarising themselves with the data we have collected on immunity in newspaper advertising in New Zealand
2. Conducting research on the use of immunity in newspaper articles, government publications and medical journals
3. Conducting research on the ways this national narrative intersects with local history, including the work done at Waikato Hospital by bacteriologist James Gordon 'Bugs' Smith and the early diphtheria vaccinations at Hamilton Schools
4. Assisting me in creating a public-facing display on immunity
5. Creating a research poster outlining our findings and results

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Student's Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the [Scholarship regulations](#))
- Display boards and items mocked up for a public-facing exhibit at Waikato Hospital
- Depending on the student's interest and aptitude, they could be involved in the writing up of an article connecting national immunity depictions to local Hamilton history.

