

OBITUARY

Murray Joseph Angland McDonald

Physician at Rotorua (1960–1994); Past Chair of NZMA (Rotorua-Taupo Branch); ONZM

Murray McDonald was born in Gisborne and died on 7 October 2011 as a result of complications of ischaemic heart disease, aged 81. His father was Ian Fraser McDonald, a school principal. His mother, Ellen Margaret Angland, daughter of a farmer.



Murray was a noteworthy physician who made a significant contribution to his community and to healthcare in New Zealand, especially in Rotorua.

Murray attended St Patrick's College in Wellington. At the relatively early age of 22 in 1952 he qualified MBChB from Otago University. While in Dunedin he boarded at Carrington College and later flatbed with the doctor-politician, Sir Peter Tapsell.

After graduating from Otago, Murray worked at Wellington Hospital for 2 years as an RMO and then for a year at Rotorua Hospital as a medical registrar before becoming a locum physician.

In 1956 he was admitted to Membership of the Australian College of Physicians, and the following year to Membership of the Edinburgh College.

On 26 November 1956 he married Rona Ellen Cox, a nurse in charge of the paediatric ward at Rotorua Hospital, and they soon left for the United Kingdom on a cargo ship with Murray serving as the ship's doctor.

He spent 2 years at the National Heart Hospital in London and returned to New Zealand in 1958 to work at Waikato Hospital as a second-year RMO where he met Ron Ensor; they were to form a close and lifelong friendship.

In 1960 he and Rona moved back to Rotorua where Murray established the first private specialist's practice in the town as a physician. The practice was supported by a part-time appointment to the Gardenholme and Queen Elizabeth (QE) Hospitals. In 1962 Murray was appointed part-time Physician at Rotorua Hospital—a position he held until his retirement in 1994.

At the time of Murray's first appointment to Rotorua Hospital it did not have a good reputation. Its standards were considered to be third-world, and junior medical staff were difficult to recruit at first. Fortunately, Rotorua's recreational opportunities and its lifestyle helped to attract doctors to the town.

Eventually the hospital provided a good library, improved junior staff quarters, an intensive care unit (ICU), a coronary care unit (CCU), a special care baby unit (SCBU), an ECG laboratory, and Elderly Services Department. Much of this development was initiated and inspired by Murray, and the hospital's reputation and medical recruitment improved as a result.

Murray was a member of the Queen Elizabeth Community Trust which partnered private investors to save the QE Hospital (first established in 1942 as a Services Convalescent Hospital providing rehabilitation to soldiers returning from World War 2) from closure in 1993. Today locals and visitors, including patients with arthritis and chronic pain, receive health or beauty spa treatments at this lovingly renovated and historic hospital.

<http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-the-journal/all-issues/2010-2019/2014/vol-127-no-1405/6357>

Murray was recognised for his services to medicine and the Rotorua community in the New Year's Honours list in 2008. He was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM). His older brother, Dr DMF McDonald, also made a major contribution to healthcare, going on to become a distinguished New Zealand psychiatrist.

Murray was a quietly religious man, which he mixed with a very practical and positive approach to life. His philosophy was encapsulated in six golden rules: "Live until midnight; charity begins at home; no-one can upset me; acceptance; don't postpone enjoyment, and place my life in his hands." When leaving someone, his farewell was never 'goodbye' – it was always: 'God Bless.'

Murray's other interests included music, reading, golf, skin diving, astronomy, and 'doing odd do-it-yourself projects at home'.

At the time of Murray's passing he was survived by Rona and their five children (Katie, Geoffrey, Fraser, Malcolm, and Robert) and four grandchildren.

This obituary was written from information recently supplied by Murray's friend and colleague, Dr Ron Ensor.