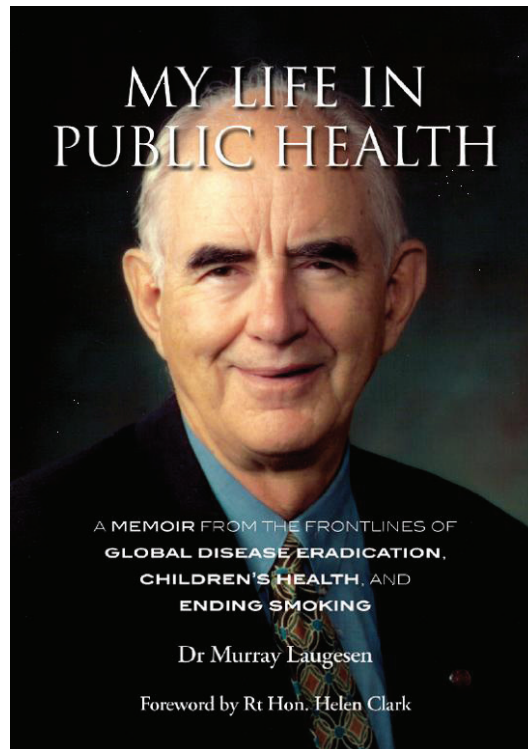


My Life in Public Health

Frank Frizelle



Dr Murray Laugesen. Published by Health NZ, 2019. ISBN 9780473470913. Contains 344 pages. Price NZ\$45.00. Foreword by Rt Hon. Helen Clarke.

In the time of Covid, some of the superheroes of the health sector are the public health physicians. This book outlines the active and varied personal and professional life of one New Zealand public health physician. The 341-page paperback book, with coloured photographs and easy-to-read text, spans Murray Laugesen's life, ending with 2018 election of the Ardern-led government. The book is broken into 12 chapters, and as one might expect from an academic, is well referenced and has an appendix, a section on abbreviations and a glossary.

The book starts as usual at the beginning of his life, with an outline of his family history in New Zealand, his early education, and his time and reflections on medical school and his subsequent training in surgery. At several points he deviates away from the narrative to comment on smoking-related activities and how this has changed from a

harmless common pastime for all, (including doctors) to today's perspective of a harmful and damaging addiction. The following chapters explore his time in India as a missionary surgeon in India, and the effect of the Indo-Pakistani war and the Bangladesh war of independence, and leads from this to his developing understanding of the importance of public health issues, leading to his first real public health position with his appointment to the coordinating agency for health planning in India. In this position he was involved in the management of children's health and infectious diseases such as small pox, polio, leprosy and tuberculosis.

Returning to New Zealand in 1978, he was appointed to the Department of Health as principal medical officer (child health) and became involved in many aspects of policy development of child health, and subsequently tobacco control, where his

efforts had a lasting influence on this aspect of health policy in New Zealand. Murray was involved with the Public Health Commission and subsequently retired just before his 60th birthday in 1995.

After retiring from the public sector Murray established his own firm, Health NZ (who published this book), contracting himself out on health policy, research and planning, of which was tobacco related. The book continues to comment on such contemporary issues as his thoughts on religion, the

Canterbury earthquakes, his own experience of ill health and the present Labour-led government.

This book describes the evolution of a public health physician and beautifully describes the extent and impact of public health across many sectors. The book would be of interest to most doctors from young doctors trying to work out which career direction to go, to the older who enjoy reflecting on how things have changed.

Competing interests:

Nil.

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