

Dr William (Bill) Taylor, FRCS



13 May 1938–5 September 2021

Dr William (Bill) Taylor passed away on 5 September 2021 at the age of 83. Sadly, he had suffered from ill-health in his last few years.

Bill was born in Whanganui and attended St Patrick's College in Silverstream, Upper Hutt, and subsequently enrolled at the Otago Medical School.

Upon graduation and completion of his house surgeon years, Bill was appointed in 1965 as the first eye registrar at Auckland Hospital at the behest of Dr Calvin Ring who was the departmental head and pre-eminent ophthalmologist of the day. Bill obviously impressed Dr Ring as in his annual departmental report; Dr Ring stated, "W (Bill) Taylor had been appointed as a registrar and was helping fully in the running of both the outpatient section and the wards." The following year, 1966, Dr Ring wrote, "Our registrar Dr Taylor provided great help in arranging and taking part in the teaching activities. Appreciation of his generous help with all clinical matters must also be recorded." Clearly Bill's merits were recognised, prompting him after two years as an eye registrar in Auckland to travel to London where he was appointed to "the house" at Moorfields Eye Hospital. Following completion of the registrar programme, Bill remained at Moorfields for what today

would be equivalent to a medical retinal fellowship with Professor Alan Bird and subsequently surgical retinal training with Dr Lorimer Fison.

Bill returned to Auckland in 1972 as the inaugural full-time Ophthalmic Tutor Specialist, a post he held for two years. Bruce Hadden was a second-year registrar at that time, and Drs Gillian Clover and Ian Hass became registrars the following year. Those and the registrars who followed benefited greatly from Bill's enthusiastic teaching across the whole field of ophthalmology. His breadth of knowledge and surgical skills were legendary, remembering at that time ophthalmologists were generalists. Bill revolutionised the Department's teaching programme and cajoled all the part-time visiting consultants to contribute. He instituted a weekly retinal fluorescein angiography meeting. He further developed the ophthalmic sub-specialties, which had been initiated in the fields of retina and strabismus by Dr Hylton Le Grice, and very much in retina by Dr Harold Coop. In addition to his expertise in medical and surgical retina, Bill also had a special interest in orbital surgery and essentially developed a tertiary referral centre.

In 1974 Bill accepted a part-time post as a visiting ophthalmic surgeon at Auckland

Hospital and at the same time joined Dr George Fenwick in private practice in Mount Street. He also developed a peripheral practice in Henderson. Shortly thereafter Bill was appointed as the Head of the Auckland Hospital Eye Department as Dr Calvin Ring had retired from hospital practice.

Bill remained committed to the public system, and he put much time and effort into planning an extensive new fit-out of the Eye Department in the Wallace Block. It was intended to be short-term, as the 1920s Wallace Block was an earthquake risk and was due for demolition in 1978. That did not eventuate, and it continued to house the Department of Ophthalmology until 2004 when the Department shifted to Greenlane Clinical Centre and the Wallace Block was demolished. As well as administering the Department, Bill continued organising comprehensive teaching programmes for the house surgeons and registrars, mostly in his own time. He organised a very successful conference of the Auckland ophthalmologists in which he coerced every consultant to give a presentation and invited Professor Ian Constable of the Lions Eye Institute in Perth as the guest speaker. It was a resounding success, academically and socially.

In 1982 Bill and Bruce Hadden together set up a retinal fluorescein angiogram and argon laser facility in the private sector, a first for New Zealand. After around five years, Bill bought out Bruce's share, and sometime after that Dr Philip Polkinghorne joined Bill in private practice.

Bill was the principal driver in establishing New Zealand's first multi-specialty group practice, which opened in 1993 with Bill, Philip Polkinghorne, Paul Rosser, and David Pendergrast. Dr Stephen Best joined shortly after. Initially called St Mark's Eye Centre, it then morphed into Auckland Eye.

Bill was a mover and shaker. He advanced ophthalmology in Auckland, especially in the sub-specialty of retina, and in teaching and training, thus paving the way for trainees to obtain their specialty qualifications in Auckland before further sub-specialty experience overseas.

Although an excellent surgeon, Bill retired from surgery unusually early, partly because like many graduates from Moorfields in that era, he remained sceptical of intra-ocular lenses because of the many early failures they had to deal with in those pioneering times.

Outside of medicine, Bill was Chairman of the Board of Governors of Sacred Heart College (Auckland) and a committed Catholic, providing low-cost eye-care to the clergy of Auckland for decades. In retirement, both he and Jo were active members of Remuera Golf Club in Auckland and regularly travelled to the UK (particularly Scotland) to see family, trace family history, and play golf. He became a keen proponent of long-line fishing off the beach at the family holiday bach on the Coromandel Peninsula.

Bill is survived by his devoted wife Jo of 58 years, and by their sons William, John, and Andrew, and their daughter Louise.

Author information:

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URL:

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