

# R E P O R T

BY

DR. NICHOLSON, OF AUCKLAND,

ON THE

STEPS TAKEN BY HIM TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF  
SMALL-POX IN THE PROVINCE OF AUCKLAND.

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PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND OF  
HIS EXCELLENCY.

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WELLINGTON.

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1872.



## REPORT BY DR. NICHOLSON ON VACCINATION, ETC.

### No. 1.

Dr. NICHOLSON to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Auckland, 16th July, 1872.

On the 18th of June last, I was requested to undertake the duties of Principal Vaccinator for this Province, by His Honor the Superintendent, in compliance with a telegram received from the Hon. J. Vogel. My acceptance was notified, and the arrangement was confirmed by a subsequent telegram of which I was informed by His Honor on the 20th June. Having regard to the fact that small-pox had obtained an entrance into the Province, and that its existence in various parts of the Colony is acknowledged, I have thought that information as to my proceedings up to the present date might not be without interest to you, in view of any action on the part of the Assembly or of any questions by honorable members. I have, therefore, the honor to submit the accompanying report, which you will see not only covers the vaccination records, but also relates to the steps which I have been called upon to suggest and submit to the authorities for the abatement of the small-pox and the safety of the non-affected part of the population.

I have, &c.,

JOHN R. NICHOLSON, M.D., F.R.C.P. Ed.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

### REPORT.

SIR,—

Auckland, 16th July, 1872.

I have the honor to report, for your information, that since the date (18th June last) on which I, at the request of the Hon. J. Vogel, undertook the duties of Principal Vaccinator for this Province, I have been daily engaged in vaccination. Although the hours for gratuitous operations were fixed nominally at from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m., yet, in consequence of the numerous applications caused by the introduction of small-pox, I have found it necessary to devote the whole day to the purpose. The number successfully vaccinated by me since the date of my appointment up to the close of this day has been, as per record kept, 1,742. This number does not include those cases in which the operation has failed to produce the ordinary effect, nor those in which, from any cause, I have considered it expedient to repeat the operation. Of this number (1,742), 1,521 have been revaccinations; that is to say, cases in which vaccination has been performed successfully at some anterior time, usually in infancy, but where the protective influence of such original operation has ceased to be exerted. The proportion of cases in which revaccination has proved successful is to me astonishing. In Great Britain, a somewhat lengthy experience enables me to say that the proportion of revaccinations successful to those of failures rarely is greater than three to one; but in Auckland, since the first date, in the first four hundred revaccinations, I had only three failures, and nearly the same remarkable proportion has continued for the remainder. This fact demonstrates a very great susceptibility to variolous disorders on the part of the Colonists, whether that be due to climatic influence or social habits, and is conclusive evidence of the necessity of revaccination of every adult in order to insure protection of the individual, and prevent the spread of small-pox.

In any Act, therefore, relating to compulsory vaccination, provision should be made as soon as possible for the revaccination of persons on arriving at adolescence. The number of applicants both for primary vaccination and for revaccination, does not yet show any signs of diminution; but I am fully able to meet all demands.

At the time I commenced my present duties in connection with the Colonial Government, the stock of vaccine lymph in the hands of Dr. Philson, to whom the distribution had been delegated previously, was entirely exhausted. My occupation of the office of Principal Vaccinator under the Provincial Government, and experiments for the introduction of lymph by infection of the heifer, which I had brought to a successful conclusion in March last, enabled me to meet the demands of medical practitioners in town and country, as well as to keep up with regularity and promptitude my own vaccinations. Had it not been that requirements were thus met, much delay and injury to the public health must have ensued while waiting for a supply from Wellington, for on the outbreak of small-pox there was little stock in the possession of any other medical practitioner. I have supplied 126 tubes of vaccine to medical practitioners and others resident in the Province since the 20th June, and I am despatching a further supply, to various districts, of eighty-eight tubes to-morrow. A prejudice has existed for some time in this Province against the use of lymph from the human subject. Although not agreeing with the holders of such opinions, yet I could not help arriving at the conclusion that such opinions were shared by a considerable section of the community, and operated prejudicially against a complete vaccination of the population. In order to remove this ground of objection, I have maintained a continuous and sufficient supply of lymph from the heifer. For this purpose I have, from my own means, purchased and inoculated in some cases two, in others three, heifer calves in one week.

Anticipating the spread of the small-pox amongst the Native Maori population, I felt it to be my duty, as soon as it was satisfactorily established that a true case of the disease had made its appearance in the Province, to put myself in communication with such of my professional brethren as were residing in districts contiguous to or occupied by Maoris, and to request their co-operation in extending the

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benefits of vaccination to their Native neighbours. Although no funds have been at my disposal to remunerate them for their labours, yet in no single instance have I met with a refusal to act, but, on the contrary, a very hearty response to my suggestions. In fact, in all cases, whether in town or country, the medical profession has shown itself, as usual, ready and anxious to do everything to encourage and promote vaccination and other remedial measures, quite irrespective of any question of remuneration. In the Native districts there appears to be (I say it with all deference) a want of organization for thorough and successful vaccination, in consequence of divided authority probably. As an illustration of my meaning, I would mention the case of the Tauranga District (not a solitary instance). On the one hand, I am applied to by the Civil Commissioner in Auckland to furnish lymph and requisites for the vaccination of the Natives to one gentleman; by Dr. Pollen, Agent to the General Government, to send to another gentleman for the same purpose; by authorities at Tauranga requesting a third gentleman may be thus supplied; and, finally, by the Surgeon to the Armed Constabulary stationed at Tauranga, Dr. Armytage (to whom I had written previous to the receipt of his letter), and whose name had not been mentioned by either of the three applications, for lymph for the same purpose. This may possibly be regarded by you as showing the necessity for some controlling head for vaccination in the Province.

The Armed Constabulary stationed in Auckland were liable, by their duties, to be brought into contact with infected clothing and individuals. I therefore assumed the responsibility of requesting the Inspector, Mr. Broham, to order a revaccination of the force. He assenting, I have operated on all the members. In addition, I have, when allowed by my other duties, visited and operated on such as required it in attendance at the Grammar School and College, the Orphan Home, St. Stephen's Native Institution, the Refuge for Destitute Children, and other public institutions. The Gaol, the Hospital and the Asylum, being under the control of the Provincial Surgeon, Dr. Philson, I have not visited, as such visitation could only be regarded as an interference not warranted by my position; but I have been informed that due precautions have been taken in those establishments.

Though not strictly pertaining to the subject-matter of this report, I may be allowed to include my own experience of the measures otherwise adopted to prevent the spread of small-pox. In the first instance, I was requested by His Honor the Superintendent and the Executive of the Province to advise with them on the steps requisite. It was found, however, that the deficiencies of legislative enactments prevented the suggestions I had the honor to offer from being carried out in their integrity. It has since been remitted to the Hon. Dr. Pollen, General Government Agent, to devise means for the arrestment of the spread of small-pox, and by his influence many of the proposed measures have been carried into effect. A building has been set apart for the reception and treatment of such cases as cannot be treated in their own homes, and another building has been provided for the reception of convalescents. Legal authority is still required to compel the removal of cases from crowded neighbourhoods, and a medical authority to determine the necessity of removal or otherwise in each case. These with other suggestions will be found more fully explained in a report which, at the request of the Hon. Dr. Pollen, I had the honor of submitting to him, signed by Dr. Philson, Mr. Stockwell, and myself, and with which doubtless you will have been made acquainted. In support of the arguments for the constitution or appointment of such medical authority, I think it necessary, and solely with that view, to say that, with one exception, every case in which small-pox has been supposed to exist has, at some period of the disorder, been referred to me for an opinion and direction as to the steps advisable to be taken, on the supposition, apparently, that I was in some way empowered to act.

It is a serious matter for a private medical man or for a non-professional person to order or aid in the removal of a patient into a small-pox hospital while the case is yet doubtful, and it might prove a more serious matter to allow one infected with the disorder to remain in a crowded house; and I can only suppose that it is with a view to avoid that responsibility that I have been so frequently called upon. I have not refused in any case to visit and advise, but have felt my powerlessness, in more than one, to act, by reason of possessing no authority. Should such or similar powers be granted by the Legislature, and authority to order the proper disposition of infected clothing, &c., and a complete organization for vaccination, I shall have little fear for the spread of small-pox, or of it maintaining its present hold on the Colony.

I have, &c.,

JOHN R. NICHOLSON, M.D., F.R.C.P. Ed.,  
Provincial Vaccinator for the Province of Auckland.

## LETTER IN EXPLANATION OF PARAGRAPH IN DR. NICHOLSON'S REPORT.

SIR,—

Auckland, 15th August, 1872.

I have respectfully to call your attention to a paragraph in my report on vaccination, dated 16th July, 1872, which is calculated, undesignedly, to convey a wrong impression. The report reads as if, amongst other institutions, I had personally visited and vaccinated the inmates of the Orphan Home, the St. Stephen's Native Institution, and the Refuge for Destitute Children. I beg to say that the children at the Orphan Home and at the Native Institution were vaccinated by Dr. Goldsboro', the Honorary Medical Attendant to those institutions, and those at the Refuge by Dr. Kennedy, the Honorary Medical Attendant to that institution; and that I was informed, on inquiry, that the operation had been done.

I hope that, in justice to these gentlemen, this explanation may be made as public as the report.

I have, &amp;c.,

JOHN R. NICHOLSON, M.D.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Wellington.

