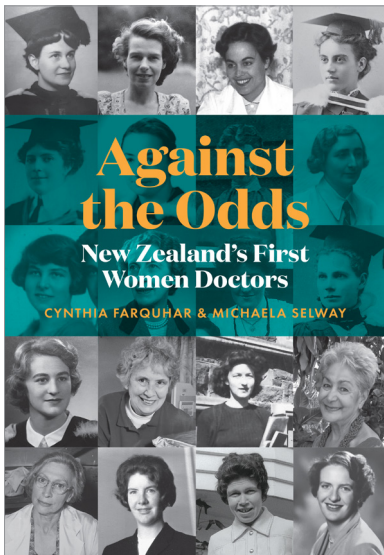




# Against the Odds

## *New Zealand's first women doctors*

CYNTHIA FARQUHAR AND MICHAELA SELWAY



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### THE WOMEN WHO BATTLED PREJUDICE AND INDIFFERENCE TO BECOME DOCTORS

In 2025, the year in which the Otago medical school celebrates 150 years, 50 per cent of graduates are women. Back in 1891 when Emily Siedeberg, who would go on to become the school's first woman graduate, applied for entrance it was not at all clear that it would be granted. There was active hostility in many quarters to the very idea that women could be doctors.

This book traces the paths of the women who, between the 1890s and 1967 (when the Auckland medical school opened), battled indifference and chauvinism and, later, many of the other challenges that faced women in the professions, to become New Zealand's first women doctors.

Their stories are often remarkable and the contribution to research, medical breakthroughs and improved patient care is to be honoured.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Professor Cindy (Cynthia) Farquhar** is the daughter of an early medical woman. Cindy trained in medicine and graduated from the School of Medicine at the University of Auckland in 1981. She trained in obstetrics and gynaecology in New Zealand and London and is the Postgraduate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Auckland. She has been the recipient of several research awards, most recently the Beaven Medal in 2024.

**Michaela Selway** is a PhD student in early medieval history at the University of Tübingen, Germany. She received her Master of Arts in History from the University of Auckland in 2020 and has worked as a historical researcher for the Early Medical Women of New Zealand Project since that time. Her doctoral research is supported by the Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes research scholarship for academic excellence.

### SALES POINTS

- The first ever history of the small but determined group of women who attended Otago Medical School
- A unique and specific way to approach our social history through a feminist lens
- Full of stories of remarkable women who battled prejudice and indifference to succeed and contribute to improved health outcomes