



# Andrew Sexton Gray – The Founder of Australian Ophthalmology

Authors: Dr Ebrar Al-Yasery<sup>1</sup>, Dr David Kaufman  
The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital, Victoria, Australia



## Early Years

- Born in Limerick, Ireland in 1826 to Captain George Blanchard Grey and Mary Ann Sexton.
- Early childhood filled with loss and tragedy. Orphaned after the death of his parents and raised by his maternal aunt, Mrs Massey.

## Medical Training

- Completed general medical training in Medicine, Surgery and Midwifery in Dublin 1846.
- Assistant to Dr William Wilde, founder and surgeon of St Mark's Ophthalmic Hospital and Dispensary for Diseases of the Eye and Ear in Dublin from ~ 1847 to 1850.
- Admission to Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons of England on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1852.
- Appointed Surgeon-Superintendent to the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners.

## Emigration to Australia

- Left England 10<sup>th</sup> November 1858 with his wife aboard the Hornet heading to Sydney.
- Sea journey of 5 months before arriving in Sydney 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1859.
- Shortly after Dr Gray left on the coastal ship Wonga Wonga to reach Melbourne 15<sup>th</sup> April 1859.
- Dr Gray registered with the Medical Board in Victoria on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1859.
- Obtained employment as the Resident Surgeon to the construction company building the Geelong to Ballarat railway between 1859 – 1862.

## Establishment of the Eye and Ear Hospitals

- Melbourne 1851 – 1861, a city of contrasts filled with prosperity but lacking sanitation and paved roads. Eye conditions such as conjunctivitis, trachoma and eye injuries were common during this period.
- Dr Gray opened a practice as a surgeon and ophthalmologist at 29 Russell Street in 1862 offering free treatment for diseases of the eye and ear to the less fortunate.
- Similar to Dr Wilde's example, Dr Gray then founded the Eye and Ear Infirmary in 1863 – a charitable hospital.
- Dr Gray covered majority of the expenses of the Eye and Ear Infirmary, however the increased demand required greater resources.

## The Melbourne Institution for Diseases of the Eye and Ear

- Formation of management committee and a public charity status in 1866.
- Through the partnership in 1870 with Dr Aubrey Bowen and the Ophthalmic and Orthopaedic Institution (OOI), further growth and development occurred.
- On 29<sup>th</sup> July 1873, name changed to The Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital – serving the state of Victoria.
- Dr Gray was an Honorary Life Surgeon and a member of the Committee of Management for 44 years.

## Later Years

- Devoted to The Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital attending the hospital even two weeks before he died.
- Lived majority of his life around the Collins Street area with his growing family.
- The Gray family had 14 children, 11 whom survived (ten daughters and one son).
- Dr Gray died at his home on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1907 at the age of 81 years. He had been suffering from cystitis, bronchopneumonia and exhaustion.



The Melbourne Institution for Diseases of the Eye and Ear



Staff including Dr Andrew Sexton Gray, centre

## Legacy in Ophthalmology

- Active and devoted surgeon mainly to the field of Ophthalmology.
- Wrote ten papers on ophthalmic surgery.
- Teacher and mentor to many clinicians.
- The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital – a centre of training excellence and leadership in Ophthalmology and Otolaryngology.

### References

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4. The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. Our History. Victoria; 2011. Available from: [https://www.eyearandear.org.au/page/News\\_and\\_Events/Events/150th\\_Anniversary\\_History/](https://www.eyearandear.org.au/page/News_and_Events/Events/150th_Anniversary_History/).

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