



**THE ADELAIDE MEDICAL SCHOOL, 1885 - 1914**

**A STUDY OF ANGLO - AUSTRALIAN SYNERGIES**

**IN**

**MEDICAL EDUCATION .**

**by**

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## *Abstract.*

In the course of the nineteenth century, a series of reforms resulted in far-reaching changes in the organization and content of medical education in Great Britain. These changes were reflected in the British colonies, both in the composition of their medical workforces and in their medical schools. In the Australasian colonies, the first university-based medical school was established in Melbourne in 1862; other schools opened in Dunedin[1877], Sydney[1883] and Adelaide[1885].

Edward Stirling, the chief founder of the Adelaide medical school, had studied in Cambridge and London, where he had been a member of the teaching staff of St George's Hospital. He was able to gain support for a medical school in the University of Adelaide, with clinical teaching in the Adelaide Hospital. A medical faculty was formed in 1886. The faculty members included some exceptionally gifted scientists and clinicians; they had diverse educational backgrounds, but there was a preponderance of teachers trained in England, both in the pre-clinical and clinical courses.

The Adelaide medical course was broadly similar to the contemporary courses in Melbourne and Sydney, and conformity was maintained by employing external examiners selected from those universities. The Adelaide school began well, and was strong enough to survive a six-year interruption in clinical teaching resulting from a quarrel with the premier of the colony.

Study of the content of the Adelaide medical course suggests that it conformed with British requirements, and gave adequate teaching by the standards of the day. There were however several deficiencies, and there were few opportunities for research. Many Adelaide graduates improved their professional capacities by postgraduate study in Great Britain. Consideration of individual careers shows that some gained greatly and were enabled to make important contributions to medical practice in Australia and elsewhere. Many Adelaide medical practitioners served in the First World War, some with great distinction.

Undergraduate teaching, postgraduate opportunities and wartime service can be seen as Anglo-Australian synergies made possible by formal and informal linkages within the British empire in its last century.