

**NEW TITLE
INFORMATION
OTAGO
UNIVERSITY
PRESS**

PUBLICATION DETAILS

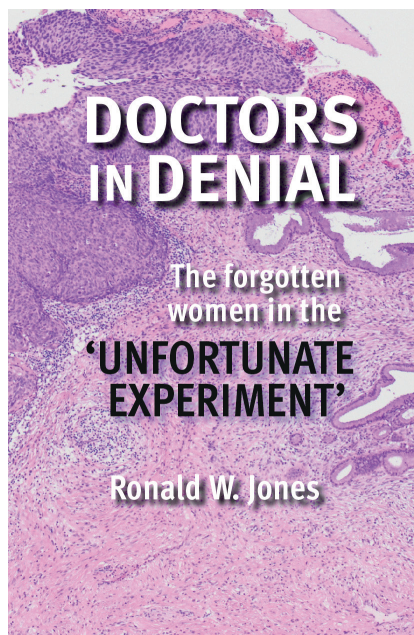
Doctors in Denial: The forgotten women
in the 'unfortunate experiment'
Ronald W. Jones

Otago University Press
www.otago.ac.nz/press
History, Women's Health
paperback

230 x 150 mm, 264 pp approx.
ISBN 978-0-947522-43-8, \$39.95

IN-STORE: FEB 2017

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DOCTORS in Denial

**The forgotten women in the
'unfortunate experiment'**

Ronald W. Jones

KEY POINTS

- First-hand account by one of the doctors who exposed the truth at NWH
- Gripping story of professional arrogance and denial

When Dr Ron Jones joined the staff of National Women's Hospital in Auckland in 1973 as a junior obstetrician and gynaecologist, Professor Herbert Green's study into the natural history of carcinoma *in-situ* of the cervix (CIS) – later called 'the unfortunate experiment' – had been in progress for seven years.

By the mid-1960s there was almost universal agreement among gynaecologists and pathologists worldwide that CIS was a precursor of cancer, requiring complete removal. Green, however, believed otherwise, and embarked on a study of women with CIS, without their consent, that involved merely observing, rather than definitively treating them. Many women subsequently developed cancer and some died.

In 1984 Jones and senior colleagues Dr Bill McIndoe and Dr Jock McLean published a scientific paper that exposed the truth, and the disastrous outcome of Green's experiment. In a public inquiry in 1987 Judge Sylvia Cartwright observed that an unethical experiment had been carried out in large numbers of women for over 20 years.

Since that time there have been attempts to cast Green's work in a more generous light. This rewriting of history has spurred Ron Jones to set the record straight by telling his personal story: a story of the unnecessary suffering of countless women, a story of professional arrogance and misplaced loyalties, and a story of doctors in denial of the truth.

I have borne a burden of guilt for not having seen the study for what it was at the outset.
– Mont Liggins

He [Green] so believed he was right he was not seeing the results of what he was doing.
– Dennis Bonham

An excellent account of Herb Green's experiment in the natural history of CIS, and of the management of the condition internationally. An enthralling read.
– Professor Malcolm Coppleson

AUTHOR

RONALD W. JONES is a retired obstetrician and gynaecologist and former clinical professor at the University of Auckland. He is a widely published international authority on lower genital tract pre-cancer and cancer. For over 30 years he has served on a range of national and international committees addressing the natural history, prevention and management of these cancers. He is a past president of the International Society for the Study of Vulvovaginal Disease and chair of the Scientific Committee of the International Federation of Cervical Pathology and Colposcopy.