



Hulme, Edward 1812 - 1876
Doctor, health administrator

Edward Hulme was born on 18 May 1812 and baptised at Hythe, Kent, England. He was the son of William Broom Hulme, a captain in the Royal Staff Corps, and his wife, Alice. At 16 he was apprenticed at the Royal College of Surgeons in London, having been a clerk and dresser to Sir Charles Bell, a noted London anatomist, at Middlesex Hospital. By 1839 he had gained the membership of the Royal College of Surgeons and the degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of St Andrews. Hulme moved to Exeter, where he was elected one of the physicians to the local dispensary. He went to Paris for further experience at the École de Médecine and was introduced to the enlightened treatment of mental disease being developed at the Salpêtrière. His educational tour was completed with midwifery at the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin. These large charitable hospitals, catering for paupers, produced the major advances in nineteenth century scientific medicine. Hulme then returned to his practice in Exeter.

In 1856 Hulme emigrated to New Zealand in the hope of abandoning medicine and becoming one of the colony's gentry. He was acquainted with Dr Robert Williams, who was already practising in Dunedin. On 4 October 1856 Hulme arrived at Otago on the *Strathmore*.

Williams had been offered the new position of Otago provincial surgeon, but his political activities forced him to withdraw. In January 1857 Hulme was appointed to the position, with a salary of £120 per annum. In January 1858 he was also appointed health officer for Otago. His duties as provincial surgeon included the superintendency of the Dunedin hospital and asylum.

Short-tempered, distant, and abrupt, Hulme's character was little suited to private practice. Few colonial doctors were, however, as well qualified for such a demanding medical and administrative position. Nevertheless, the new provincial surgeon was not welcomed with enthusiasm. Many in Otago saw the hospital and its surgeon as an unnecessary luxury, particularly as the province faced the novelty of paying for both. Dunedin felt neither threatened nor concerned by its handful of indigent sick. Only 15 patients were treated in the hospital during 1856. Within a few years an influx of gold-seeking migrants had transformed the situation. With the inundation came justifiable fears of epidemic from the city's appalling sanitary conditions, and less warranted anxiety about a tide of mentally and physically unfit migrants.

Burgeoning responsibilities transformed Hulme from a part-time public general practitioner into the country's first full-time health administrator. In 1863, at the height of the goldrush, patient numbers at the hospital in Dunedin rose to 1,131 over a 12 month period. W. A. Yates was appointed resident surgeon in 1862, and Hulme served as superintendent, with a consulting practice. The stench-ridden, insanitary hospital buildings were soon in desperate need of replacement. In 1866 a new and larger institution was opened in a building converted from use as a display hall in the New Zealand Exhibition of 1865. On Hulme's recommendation a separate mental hospital had been built in 1863. Hulme's frequent complaints and demands continually placed the needs of his various institutions before an often reluctant provincial administration. Within his own medical empire he was unquestioned, warding off criticism from outsiders with the same bluff and outspoken manner he inflicted on his subordinates.

In addition to his institutional responsibilities, Hulme was president of the Otago Medical Board from 1864 until its dissolution in 1867. The board controlled medical licensing, in an attempt to improve the standard of medical practitioners within the province. Until 1868 Hulme was also a member of the national medical board which succeeded it. He served briefly on the town board of Dunedin in 1861--62, was one of three trustees appointed to organise a provincial museum in 1865, and was a foundation member of the Otago university council in 1869, a position he held until his death. In 1866 he had been made a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. Edward Hulme died suddenly in Dunedin on 27 December 1876 and is buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery, with a headstone which is unfortunately not easily visible because of an overgrown rose bush and wilding vegetation.

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