



Wise Woman Archives Trust (Inc) Acquisition

An interesting donation has recently been received from midwife Sue Bogaard of the Bay of Plenty. As alarming as it seems today, these lead nipple shields were probably still in use until at least the early 20th Century, being “recommended by the most eminent medical men for the prevention and cure of sore nipples”. Today lead is recognised as a toxic heavy metal and all skin contact with it, or ingestion of it, should be avoided.

The testament on the underside of the box, taken from Dr Wansbrough’s paper read before the Society of Arts, reads as follows:

“Gentlemen, this little Apparatus, which I have the great honour to submit to your notices, posses these great desiderata. As a preventative, it is requisite only to say that it effectively accomplishes the desired end by being applied immediately after delivery. Its curative character in the Nipple being immersed in a Solution of Lactate of Lead, formed by the Lactate Acid in the Milk acting on the Metal, the whole contained in a reservoir, as it were, in the cavity of the Shield, which prevents pressure, and by adhering closely, may be worn with the dress. I have used the Shields in the most severe cases of somewhat extensive practice, for upwards of a quarter of a century, even where the Nipple has supperated and slouched to the extent of half its volume, threatening the destruction of the whole, AND I HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED A FAILURE.”



Photographer: Tony Banks

Directions for use, as written on the lid underside, are as follows:

*“In using them, the only attention required is to wipe the Nipple previous to sucking and apply the Shield again immediately afterwards. **They are in no way likely to be injurious to the infant.** Should the edge of the Shield become inverted, it may be instantly restored by being laid on a flat surface, and rubbed round with the finger.”*



If you are able to provide any further information about these nipple shields (or would like to discuss donations of any historical materials on maternity to the Wise Woman Archives Trust Inc) please contact Maggie Banks, 15 Te Awa Road, RD 3, Hamilton, Phug (64) 07 856 4612 or email her at wwat@ihug.co.nz.