



## What and Why we Collect

### **Introduction:**

The Thackray is a place that inspires people with the passion and purpose of medicine and healthcare, past present and future. We comprise collections, a historic building and a unique community. We're the UK's largest independent medical museum, the only major medical museum in the North of England and the only museum of any sort in the east end of Leeds. The museum occupies a Victorian workhouse infirmary, with a collection of over 70,000 objects, books and archives – including some internationally significant collections such as the world's largest collections of early English apothecary jars and British medical trade catalogues.

The collections focus on responses to people's medical and healthcare needs – the innovation, enterprise, technology and collective effort to make us all well, a focus on collaboration and shared responsibility for health that sets us aside from many more traditional medical museums. We co-create collections with diverse communities ensuring that collections include and represent the many health cultures all around us. We also reflect current issues in health by working closely with public health, social prescribing, medical and academic colleagues.



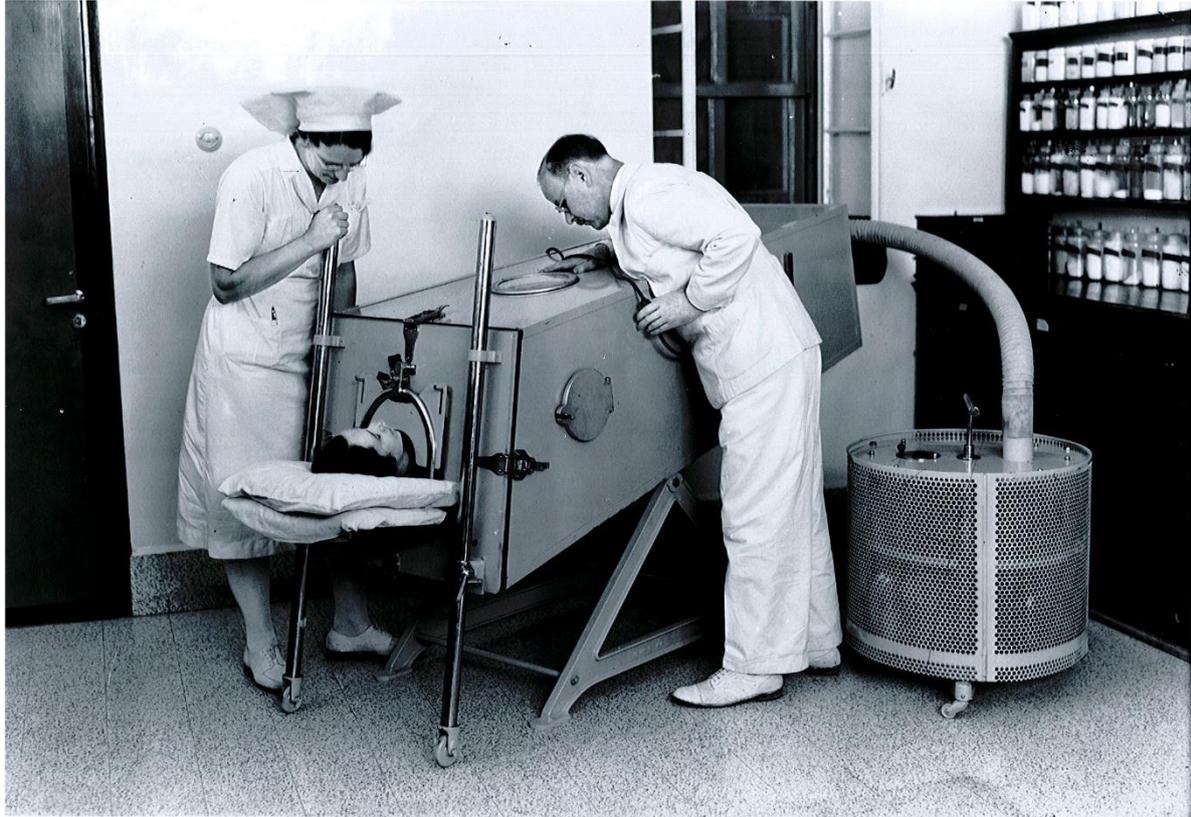
### **Collecting Themes:**

Collecting is focussed on themes of national (English) importance within medical and healthcare innovation, particularly from the north of England and Leeds in particular. For example:

- We collect from the multiplicity of healthcare cultures found in the region such as Chinese medicine and West African herbal remedies
- UK and international medical 'firsts' which are pioneered by Leeds individuals or organisations are important such as the Albutt thermometer; Charnley/Thackray hip implant; Frank Parson's work in kidney dialysis; William Astbury's camera photographing DNA; UK hand transplant operations.

We collect both historic and contemporary material. We have large historic collections and now prioritise carefully in this area, building on our strengths and to fill significant gaps in the collection. The founding collection was concerned with the surgical supply trade including the story of how innovative products were developed with surgeons, designed, manufactured, marketed and distributed. This remains a core theme for our collecting.

We are keen to collect the story of where, how and by whom objects have been made and used. This enables us to share the human story behind them. We collect stories from a variety of perspectives, from innovators, practitioners and, importantly, from patients.



### **Collecting Limitations:**

People often want to donate objects to the museum for us to care for and to share. This is really generous and many new items have been added to the collection in this way. Acquiring objects into the permanent collection brings long term implications, however, and we must be as sure as we can that material will be useful in the future for a wide range of people. This might be for research, for education or display for example. We have to be very selective about what we can collect, avoiding duplicate material and very large items for example (which we can often record by photography instead). We also avoid collecting material which is well represented in other museums such as specialist medical museums.

**If you have an object which you would like to donate, or if you would like to make an enquiry about the collection, please email the curatorial team: [info@thackraymuseum.org](mailto:info@thackraymuseum.org)**