



RACP
Specialists. Together
EDUCATE ADVOCATE INNOVATE

The Neil Hamilton Fairley Medal 2025

A once in five year chance to recognise global eminence in medicine



The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) invites you to nominate outstanding researchers, eminent peers and field-leading colleagues for the College's most prestigious and exclusive medal, awarded once every five years.

The Neil Hamilton Fairley Medal recognises a practitioner who has made world-leading contributions to the field of medical science.

Past recipients are of the calibre of Professor Colin Sullivan, inventor of the Continuous Positive Airway Pressure machine, Nobel Laureate Dr Barry J Marshall, who established the link between *Helicobacter Pylori* and peptic ulcers, and Professor Donald Metcalf, discoverer of the role of hematopoietic cytokines in blood cell formation, now widely applied in chemotherapy and transplants.

The Fellow



A soldier (part of the first Australian Imperial Force) outside a hospital during WWI in Egypt.

This medal honours one of Australia's most esteemed and visionary physicians, Brigadier Sir Neil Hamilton Fairley KBE CStJ FRACP FRCP FRCPE FRS; an influential pioneer in tropical medicine whose knowledge and research changed the course of entire military campaigns, and influenced world events.

Fairley first rose to prominence as a pathologist in the first Australian Imperial Force during WW1, stationed in Egypt.

His papers on dysentery, typhus and the potential for malaria to have a catastrophic effect on a

fighting force, coupled with his research into fluke worm caused diseases which threatened troops, merited mentions in dispatches, promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and eventually an OBE. The complement fixation test he developed for schistosomiasis is still in use today.

Fairley spent the inter-war years in Melbourne and Bombay, before returning to London, Harley Street and a position as Director of Pathology at the Hospital of Tropical Diseases.

He re-enlisted in the Second Australian Imperial

Force at the outbreak of WW2. As a consultant physician, holding the rank of Colonel to Australian forces in the Middle East, and a clinician-scientist, his expertise in tropical medicine was unchallengeable.

In the Pacific theatre, Fairley's contributions arguably allowed the Pacific Islands campaign to proceed; it had previously been imperilled by malaria. Deaths from dysentery on the Kokoda trail were vastly reduced as a result of Fairley and JSK Boyd's diagnostic methodology and chemotherapy clinical trials.

Supreme Allied Commander General Douglas Macarthur appointed Fairley Chairman of an Inter-Allied Advisory Committee on Tropical Medicine, and Australian orders for malaria control proved a turning point in the tropical war in both Burma and the Islands.

Post war, Fairley returned to the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in London, becoming the first Wellcome Professor of Clinical Tropical Medicine at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He was knighted in 1950, and became the recipient of honorary degrees from three Australian Universities, an honorary FRCPE, and numerous other awards.



Malaria Research Unit scientists, Majors T.S. Gregory (left) and J.L. Tounge, examining blood samples in the MRU laboratory, Cairns, November 1945.

The Medal The RACP established its most prestigious award in 1969, with the generosity of Lady Mary Hamilton Fairley. Fellows of the RACP nominate candidates to receive the medal. It was last awarded in 2018.



Nominate now

The College seeks nominations for the RACP's most prestigious medal. Nominations for the 2025 award will close at 5 pm (AEDT) 31 July 2024.

The award is open to both Fellows of the RACP and to non-Fellows, but all candidates must be nominated by a Fellow of the College. Applications from Fellows on their own behalf cannot be accepted.

Nominees should be leaders in their field, but nominations from all areas of medicine including research, clinical practice and medical education are encouraged.

For more information, including selection criteria and a nomination form visit the the [RACP Foundation webpage](#)

Past medal recipients

2017 Professor Roger Reddell AO

2018 Professor Alan Mackay-Sim as part of The Royal College of Physicians, London 500th Anniversary

2012 Professor Colin Sullivan, AO, FRACP

2006 Dr Barry J Marshall, AC, FRACP, FRS, FAA, Winner of Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

1993 Professor Donald Metcalf, AC, FRACP, FAA, FRC

1988 Professor Austin E Doyle, AO, FRACP

1984 Dr Stanley J M Goulston, AO, MC, FRACP, FRCP

1979 Professor C R B Blackburn, AC, FRACP, FRCP

1974 Dr Ian J Wood, MBE, FRACP, FRCP

1969 Sir Edward Ford, OBE, FRACP, FRCP.

Direct enquiries to the RACP Foundation at foundation@racp.edu.au