



# NZ WOMEN IN MEDICINE CONFERENCE 2024

Ko te tumanako me haere tahi tatou  
Hope moves us forward together

## Prof. Helen Danesh-Meyer

Helen Danesh-Meyer, is the first female Professor of Ophthalmology in New Zealand and holds the Sir William and Lady Stevenson Chair in Ophthalmology and Head of Academic Neuro-ophthalmology and Glaucoma. She was the youngest appointed professor at the University of Auckland Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences and one of 2 women who is professor in a surgical speciality. Helen is a clinician-scientist that divides her time equally between patient care/surgery and research. She has been included in the top 20 of the 'Power List' of top 100 influential ophthalmologist internationally as well as the top 100 Most influential female ophthalmologists internationally. Helen has published approximately 300 papers, chapters and books and raised over \$15M in grant funding. Several of her research findings have transformed clinical practice and her research has been featured in the New Scientist.

Helen has been an astute and forceful advocate – both nationally and globally – for the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion in ophthalmology. Through service as the Chair of Women in Ophthalmology for the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmology, Chair of Women in Vision NZ and on the Regional Representative for Women Ophthalmology Worldwide she has helped introduce innovative set of policies that have reduced inequities in clinical and scientific training. By publishing far-reaching articles in professional journals that have documented and explored biases faced by women who train in surgery, she has provided an enduring evidence base to sustain campaigns for equity which has resulted in policy changes in RANZCO. Helen has spear-headed the “Women in Ophthalmology” Tick, which is an endorsement by RANZCO of conferences and meeting that meet diversity targets for their conferences. This is the first such system internationally in any surgical organisation. She has also established a platform through RANZCO which profiles accomplished female surgeons to provide them





# NZ WOMEN IN MEDICINE CONFERENCE 2024

Ko te tumanako me haere tahi tatou  
Hope moves us forward together

with further career-advancing opportunities. Helen is also developing a program that focuses on nurturing young Māori women to consider a career in surgery.

Helen, herself, has achieved numerous 'firsts' for NZ ophthalmologist: first NZ member of the international Glaucoma Research Society (membership determined by research contribution to the field), the first NZ ophthalmologist to be Visiting Professor at Harvard Fall Festival, first Australian or NZ to be appointed to the American Academy of Ophthalmology Basic Clinical Science Course, first female Chair of the RANZCO Scientific Programme Committee, and first NZ ophthalmologist to serve on the Editorial Board of American Journal of Ophthalmology and Ophthalmology.

Helen is also an active contributor to the wider community strongly advocating for the rights of patients. She is the only New Zealand Ophthalmologist to have been awarded the Paul Harris Award by Rotary for her service to the community. She is a Founding Trustee and Chair of Glaucoma New Zealand, a charitable trust to prevent blindness from glaucoma. She is also on the Executive Advisory Committee for Word Glaucoma Association. Helen has co-founded Vision Research Aotearoa, a charity established to support young dynamic New Zealanders (from high school to PhD stage to encourage a career in vision research. Helen has been awarded prestigious prizes by the leading professional and scientific organisation and in 2022 received the highest recognition of the College Medal for the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists for her enduring role in research, education, and community engagement. She has been made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM).

