

## Stephens, Henry Douglas (1877-1952)

Henry Douglas Stephens (1877-1952), paediatric surgeon, was born on 26 June 1877 at Williamstown, Melbourne, eldest son of John Charles Stephens, newspaper proprietor, and his wife Kate, née Douglas. Educated at Camberwell Grammar School (dux in 1894), he graduated from the University of Melbourne (M.B., 1899; B.S., 1900) with honours in all years and an exhibition in anatomy. While training at St Vincent's and the Melbourne and Children's hospitals, he was influenced by William Snowball and by the surgeon Peter Bennie. Stephens was awarded an M.D. (1903) and M.S. (1905) by the University of Melbourne. On 6 September 1911 he married with Congregational forms Eileen, daughter of the paediatrician Frank Hobill Cole with whom he was in private practice for some time.

A tireless worker, Stephens became resident medical officer at the Children's Hospital in 1901, clinical assistant to the out-patients' department in 1903 and honorary medical officer attending out-patients in 1909. He also served as honorary pathologist in 1904-14. Appointed honorary surgeon to in-patients in 1920, he retired in 1940 but returned to act in that post during World War II. He was a member of the committee of management in 1946-52. Serving the Children's Hospital for forty-five years, Stephens became recognized as one of Australia's leading paediatric surgeons: colleagues respected his energy, his receptive mind and his devotion to duty. His prime interest was in surgery of the cleft lip and palate. The Henry Douglas Stephens Memorial Operating Theatre was named in his honour. He was also consultant paediatrician to the Women's Hospital, Melbourne, in 1931-45.

Co-founder of the Melbourne Paediatric Society, Stephens was its honorary secretary for twenty years (president 1928 and 1940). He was also president of the British Medical Association (Victoria) in 1926, vice-president of the B.M.A. centenary meeting in London in 1932 and president of the paediatric section of the Australasian Medical Congress, Adelaide, in 1937. He was, as well, president of the Melbourne Medical Association (1920), the Australian Physiotherapists' Association (1945-51) and foundation president of the Australian Paediatrics Association (Australian College of Paediatrics) in 1950. He served from 1931 to 1940 on the faculty of medicine and lectured at the university on diseases of children; from 1935 to 1940 he was dean of the clinical school, Royal Children's Hospital; and he was a councillor of the Royal Victorian College of Nursing and the Victorian Society for Crippled Children.

A 'kindly, lovable soul', Stephens died in Melbourne on 17 June 1952 and was cremated. He was survived by his wife, three daughters and a son. James Govett's portrait of Stephens is owned by the family.

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