

## **Sterilisers and Antibiotics**

*Comments from Una Keast AANS NFX 34699*

During the War years the only so-called antibiotics available were the sulphur drugs. In 1943, Penicillin was introduced and used in a drip, sub-cutaneously or intramuscularly. In later years it was given in capsule form.

Cross infection and 'golden staph' were unheard of as asepsis was practised, hands were scrubbed before attending to patients dressings, sister's hair was covered and no jewellery was worn. Doctors' hair was worn as short back and sides, and no beards.

The nurses made the dressings for the operating theatre and the wards, including the sponges and bandages. Whenever it was required, these dressings were hand washed by staff.

This was not a 'throw away' society. Surgical instruments, including syringes and needles were sometimes sterilized by boiling them in adapted four gallon kerosene/petrol tins. These were set on a hand pumped primus to gain the desired heat.

Thankfully, these conditions did not always prevail in my various theatres of overseas duties with the AANS which was attached to the 2 nd AIF.