

William Harvey

Born: 1751

President: 1784-1785, 1791-1792, 1797-1798, 4 August 1800 – 18 October 1800, 1802-1803, 1809-1810, 1814-1815

Died: 1819

William Harvey was born in Strabane in 1751 to the Reverend Adam Harvey and was educated by him prior to attending university. William graduated BA from Trinity College Dublin in 1771, and MD from Edinburgh University in 1774, having defended a thesis entitled *De Venenis*. He then entered the Physic line at Leiden University in 1775.

During his career he held three major posts, namely Physician General to the Army, Consultant Physician to Dr Steevens' Hospital, and Consultant Physician to the Rotunda Lying-in Hospital. His main area of clinical interest was infection control. In his army role, he was commissioned to investigate a serious outbreak of garrison fever, which was complicated by pneumonia and dysentery, in Athlone in late 1798 following the rebellion.

Jennerian vaccination was introduced in Ireland in 1800 and was embraced by the College of Physicians. In 1803, Harvey received an order from the Lord Lieutenant to consult with the College of Surgeons in order to 'form a joint opinion as to the best method of propagating and preserving genuine cow pox matter' for postal delivery throughout the country.¹ This led to the establishment of the Cow Pock Institution in 1804.

In 1817, he was instrumental in setting up soup kitchens and fever wards at Dr Steevens' Hospital. He retired the following year due to ill health and died in 1819.

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¹ John Widdess, *A History of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, 1654-1963* (London: F & S Livingstone, 1963), 117-8.

