

In pictures and words here is the essence of the celebration for the opening ceremony of the Sophia pharmacy on February 13th, 2026.



Korero By Michelle Vette
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The Medical Section

So, in a month that we are hosting here in Aotearoa New Zealand, the sculptural image of the double dodecahedron RS inaugurated as the Foundation Stone of the first Goetheanum. A piece by the Dutch Sculptor and General Secretary, Rik ten Cate, as it continues its journey around the globe, before us Australia, before Australia, Florence Italy, before Italy Poland and so on across the continents and around the world since 2024. But here now.

Also, the month that the Medical Section and the Anthroposophical Society is very actively acknowledging the 150-year birthday of Dr Ita Wegman. The inaugural leader of the medical section and a vital person in the development of anthroposophy and the work of Rudolf Steiner. A woman who's leit motif could be considered her statement- I am for going ahead.

In this month we are also here in our Antipodean uniqueness at the opening of the Sophia Pharmacy

I am very thrilled to be here and am actually in awe that this Sophia Pharmacy has emerged from the realms of inspiration and ideas to not only a grounded apparent physical space, but a physical space endowed with substances, with processes, with the possibility of transformation of substance and carrying healing intention for the human being.

And is an acknowledged accredited recognised compounding pharmacy, specialising in Anthroposophic medicine, a place for the extension of scientific medicine. Meeting the world of alchemy, of Rosicrucian intention and activity.

Nic's work to get to this place to where she can welcome us here to celebrate and acknowledge Sophia Pharmacy has been remarkable. Tenacious, consistent, non-stop and an expression of her personal destiny initiative for sure. Being in awe of all she has, and is, achieving I would like to acknowledge all those people in our community who have contributed to that, who have seen her vision and been able to take that on and contribute, to take up a piece of the creating. A community of development.

A small but potent example of that, which I relate as part of my brief to speak from the perspective of the Medical Section, a part of the School of Spiritual Science of the Anthroposophical Society- has been a series of zoom meetings with several people from different aspects and professions of medicine and health care were brought together for a time as a kaitiaki of the journey of anthroposophical medicines in New Zealand. These meetings arose in a time of crisis and real need for options, alternatives and conscious carrying of both the spiritual ideal of the medicines and the substances themselves.

A real journey of section work was enabled and part of that became a recognising of what was happening in our anthroposophic professions here in Aotearoa NZ but also the possibilities of what could happen and is starting to happen, alongside or perhaps on the bow stream of Nic's initiative in saying yes to her role here and as an independent Anthroposophic pharmacist and owner.

This is relevant to me- and forgive me for delving heavily into Anthro speak for a moment- this is relevant to me, as I consider the recent work of Marc Desaulles, the Swiss AS Chair and Treasurer, (and BTW another of Nic's roles is the Treasurer of the ASNZ , just saying) where he brought a new way of considering the relationship in the AS out of the form of the first Goetheanum.

You may be aware of this from the GAS AGM, he brought a picture of the relationship between AS membership, ones pink card and the large cupola of the first Goetheanum,

and then after the world of anthroposophy opening up and being explored, there a turning point and review, before then the small cupola's being 'entered', the school of spiritual science and First Class membership and one's blue card. With the representative of man before one.

What has been living strongly in me in considering the Sophia Pharmacy is the next step where he began to illustrate all the various initiatives and activities from the Section work, the Class ,of the Society and School work, as the upturned blue cupola, containing the pink cupola and being integrated by a white 'light' or stream or focus.

His drawing in his talk then had many of these blue Society holding, pink School of Spiritual Science lining, white masted coracles of initiative of the Anthroposophical Society. And this image is one that Nic's work here embodies also. And as peoples of the Pacific the image of this Anthroposophical waka can resonate in our souls.

At the beginning of anthroposophic medicine there were many simple starts. There were not yet so many remedies, not yet so many therapies. Things were discovered and used for the very first time.

Adam Blanning, co leader of the medical Section, recently considered how did it feel for Ita Wegman to prepare and inject the first mistletoe preparations, when there was no long-standing body of experience to build upon? What kind of "evidence base" was used?

Actually, he identifies, it was an incredibly strong one – close collaboration with Rudolf Steiner, deep connection with the spiritual world, and the wish to serve. Ita Wegman created, over and over, what was needed, using what was available, with a generous heart.

And he asks also how can that kind of experience echo into our present work?

For Adam this is a question being carried as part of the impulse for "anthroposophic medicine for the communities". The question for this group, simply stated, is "how to bring anthroposophic medicine insights, in a broad and generous way, to places with modest circumstances where there are few material resources?". It's a different approach than saying that the best solutions are to bring in therapeutic riches from other places. Instead, how do we listen for the way the spiritual world manifests in different places around the world? How can we learn and renew from places where anthroposophic therapeutic work may just be starting?

And although we have worked out of the Medical Section impulse for many decades on this far-flung shore, or as I prefer to think of it, in the centre of what might yet be possible, on the shores of the future. We have the possibility to continue to develop the warmth of engagement for anthroposophy with these lands and seas and peoples, remembering our forebears as it were- Dr Ken Friedlander, Sylvia, and our loved Kristina Friedlander to acknowledge with a few names those who have passed and were sowers of seeds for our medicine.

Nic's intention in collaboration with Richard and Helen, and others, is to develop geographic medicine, to add to the richness of our ability to help, with substance that is from the same whenua as the bodies that have birthed here, carry the karma and destiny that leads them towards the possibility of healing or perhaps living with illness.

This all sounds admirable and of our times, and perhaps even 'woke'. And it is. Because as ever we need to be awoken and aware and with a heart full of compassion, to understand the other direction that medicine and medicines are moving into.

For example, Marion Debus, Medical Section co-leader, describes these primary directions as digitalization and acceleration, threatening to alienate life and isolate the soul.

She also identifies economization and the need to generate profit in the healthcare sector as the third aspect.

She discusses the processes, from an Anthroposophic lens how biomedical engineering and digitalization reassemble an image of our organism and aims to provide so called precision medicine tailor made and 'personalised' medicine for specific molecular biological abnormalities. For more detail, please seek out her article 'AM in the 21st Century' in The Goetheanum, 1/1/26.

In summary she contends anthroposophic medicine, with the concepts of the etheric body and of warmth, provide powerful tools and perspectives for individual healers and the therapeutic community.

To reorientate ourselves back to today and today's celebration let us hold the following as another image of healing for each of us. As Rudolf Steiner said:

But you must find the bridge to experience this warmth-organization in such a way that you find your way from the experience of the differentiations of warmth within the individual organs to a moral warmth. You will have to come to experience what is called a "warm heart" in such a way that you will feel this warmth in your physical being. You must find the way from the scientific-physiological to the spiritual-moral and from the spiritual-moral to the physiological-anatomical.

And so, to conclude this korero

Marion Debus spoke recently of how the path of warmth developed by anthroposophic medicine and the spiritual communities that arise from it, can lead us so far into supranature that a powerful, forward-looking balance to the downward spiral of modern medicine will emerge. She asks: Where are the sources of life? They lie in what inspires moral ideals. Let us be imbued with moral ideals and carry them out into the world as healing, creative impulses. That is the source.

Nic's work here, all of our work here, is Medical Section work. It is the work of community building, and this activity has a direct effect on the etheric body and creates healing forces.

Michelle Vette
February 13th
Sophia Pharmacy opening.



Inaugural Address – Sophia Pharmacy 13th February 2026

Dr Richard Drexel

Good afternoon, friends, and colleagues,

It is a joy and an honour to welcome you to the opening of Sophia Pharmacy – a pharmacy for integrative health, and a new chapter in how we think about medicines, healing, and community.

Sophia Pharmacy stands at a crossroads between worlds. On one hand, we have the remarkable achievements of today’s medicine: life-saving drugs, and technologies that diagnose and treat disease with astonishing precision. On the other, we have traditional, complementary and integrative approaches – the practices that so many people already use, quietly and persistently, to support their health, manage chronic illness, and care for their families. This afternoon is about building bridges between worlds, and doing it consciously, responsibly and with heart.

The two Sophias – wisdom and changing consciousness

The name “Sophia” in Sophia Pharmacy has a double origin, and both streams of meaning speak directly to what begins here today.

In the Christian-esoteric and anthroposophical understanding, Holy Sophia is the being of divine, cosmic wisdom – the spiritual impulse that seeks to permeate human thinking, feeling and willing with clarity, love and moral imagination. Sophia is not abstract intellect; she is living wisdom: the power that helps us unite knowledge with genuine compassion and ethical action.

At the same time, Sophia Pharmacy also honours one of Aotearoa’s great women: Guide Sophia, Sophia Hinerangi, whose Māori name was Te Paea Hinerangi. She was the famed guide of Lake Rotomahana and the Pink and White Terraces and a true pioneer in New Zealand’s tourism, the woman who sensed the warning signs on Lake Tarawera before the 1886 eruption, and who sheltered more than 60 people in her strong-built whare at Te Wairoa on that terrible night. Her house withstood the ash and falling debris when many others did not, and her courage, foresight and presence of mind quite literally saved lives.

In Te Paea we meet a representative of changing consciousness – someone who could read spiritual and nature’s signs, who could stand at the threshold between worlds seen and unseen, and who used that awareness in service of others. She, too, is a bearer of Sophia: of living, guiding wisdom rooted in this land.

If we listen to these two “Sophias” together, a picture emerges of what this pharmacy is called to be: a place where clear thinking and warm heart, science and spiritual awareness, foresight and responsibility, local roots and global horizons, work side by side in service of human health and human development.

Two gifts for the founding pharmacist – inclusion in image and substance

This afternoon we also honour the founding pharmacist, Nic Parkes, with two very particular gifts that embody this impulse of bringing worlds together.

The first is a Realgar stone from the Altai mountain range in Siberia – a place where four countries meet: Russia, China, Kazakhstan and Mongolia. This mineral gift carries the image of borders touching, of different lands, cultures and streams converging in one high, ancient landscape.

Realgar itself has a long history in traditional Chinese medicine. For more than a thousand years, it has been used in carefully prepared forms, internally and externally. Furthermore, Realgar has a history in Anthroposophical Medicine.

In recent decades, modern research has confirmed that Realgar, which is pure arsenic-sulphide, can have powerful biological effects: refined preparations have shown anti-cancer activity, especially in acute promyelocytic leukaemia, where they can trigger leukaemia cells to die and help bring some patients into remission, and laboratory studies suggest similar effects on other tumour cells, inducing apoptosis and blocking their growth.

At the same time, contemporary toxicology is very clear: realgar is an arsenic-containing mineral and must never be romanticised or used casually.

So, Realgar stands here today both as a symbol and as a teacher. As a symbol, it mirrors Sophia Pharmacy: a meeting-point of many worlds, where real power is present but must be handled with knowledge, experience and respect. As a teacher, it reminds us that in integrative medicine, “natural” does not automatically mean “safe”.

The second gift is Kawakawa Hydrosol from Waiheke Island – a gentle plant medicine drawn from a native Aotearoa New Zealand taonga. Kawakawa is a strong anti-inflammatory, an antimicrobial, an antioxidant and has a mild analgesic effect. Dr. Rose Pere called it “The Faith Essence for the Child of Light”. It carries courage, inner freedom, enthusiasm, and deep interest in life; it speaks of this land, its people, and its healing plants. Where the Realgar stone comes from far away, from the mountains of Central Asia, Kawakawa grows close to home, rooted in the whenua and purakau, in New Zealand’s soil and story.

Together, mineral and plant, foreign and local, distant mountain and nearby island, offer a powerful image of what Sophia Pharmacy wants to do: to bring things together and work inclusively. To honour remedies from faraway places and the healing forces of this land. To welcome both the depth of ancient traditions and the insights of modern science. To recognise that real health care in our time must learn to hold many threads at once and weave them into a coherent whole.

Why integrative health is emerging now

Why is such a place important now?

We live in a time when people are living longer, often with multiple chronic conditions. Many are navigating not just one diagnosis, but a whole landscape of health challenges over many years. People are seeking care that treats them as whole human beings, not just as a list of problems or test results. They want support for their bodies, their emotions, their relationships, their sense of purpose etc. They want to talk to professionals who can hold all of that together.

At the same time, we see in every community that people are already combining different forms of care. They might take medication from their GP, drink herbal teas, use self-grown cannabis, practise yoga or meditation, visit a rongoā practitioner or an acupuncturist, and research options online. The reality is integrative – whether the health system acknowledges it or not. The challenge is that people are often left to weave all this together alone.

Integrative health is not “either–or”. It is not a forced choice between conventional medicine or complementary practices. It is intelligent: medical care is one entity, asking: what combination of evidence-based and experience-based treatments, lifestyle support, complementary therapies etc. will best serve this person, at this moment in their life?

The global context – WHO’s plan for TCIM 2025–2034

This local step at Sophia Pharmacy is also part of a larger global movement. The World Health Organisation has adopted a Global Traditional Medicine Strategy for 2025–2034 that sets a clear direction for the coming decade of traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine – TCIM.

This plan has a simple but profound vision: that people everywhere should be able to access traditional, complementary, and integrative services that are safe, effective, and people-centred, as part of universal health coverage. It recognises that billions of people already use these forms of medicine, and that countries need to move from a patchwork of unregulated, sometimes unsafe practices toward carefully integrated, well-regulated, evidence-informed care.

The plan rests on four key aims.

First, to recognise and value TCIM – not as a curiosity on the margins, but as a meaningful part of how communities understand and practise health. That includes honouring indigenous and local systems, protecting traditional knowledge, and seeing TCIM as a contributor to resilience and sustainable development.

Second, to strengthen evidence and knowledge. The WHO plan calls for better research and methodological diversity.

Third, to ensure quality and safety through appropriate regulation.

And fourth, to support the integration of TCIM into national health systems, especially into primary care, where most people's health journeys begin and unfold.

Sophia Pharmacy stands exactly in this stream. It is a local, concrete expression of what this global plan is pointing toward.

Benchmarks for anthroposophical medicine – a sign of maturing systems

Within this larger TCIM landscape, Anthroposophical Medicine has a special connection to Sophia Pharmacy. Anthroposophical Medicine arises from the same spiritual-scientific impulse that speaks of Holy Sophia. It seeks to deepen conventional medicine by adding a more complete view of the human being and by using anthroposophical remedies and a wide range of therapies as well as it is fully embracing the principles and achievements of modern medicine.

In recent years, an essential step has been taken at the international level: the World Health Organisation has published “Benchmarks for Training in Anthroposophical Medicine. These benchmarks set out what safe, competent training in Anthroposophical Medicine should look like – entry requirements, the structure and depth of study, clinical competencies, ethical stance, and safety knowledge.

Why does that matter for us here?

Because these benchmarks mark a shift from “this is something some people do” to “this is something that can be clearly described, taught, evaluated and, where appropriate, recognised”, like in Switzerland, Germany, Latvia, Brazil, Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Slovenia, plus various other European states. The benchmarks are intended as tools for national authorities, regulators, and professional bodies when they consider accrediting TCIM training and practice.

For a pharmacy like Sophia Pharmacy, this is vital. It means that when anthroposophical remedies are made, used or recommended, there can be a clear expectation of the competence and training that stand behind them. It means we are not just dealing with isolated products on a shelf, but with a coherent medical approach that is willing to be transparent, to be evaluated, and to grow.

In all of this, Sophia Pharmacy can become a hub for collaboration. A place where questions are welcomed, not rushed. Where “natural” does not automatically mean “safe”, and “conventional” does not automatically mean “cold” or impersonal. Where the aim is not to win a battle between systems, but to serve the person standing at the counter, with all their complexity and dignity.

Responsibility, inclusiveness and the path ahead

But if we take the name “Sophia”, these gifts, and this global context seriously, opportunity comes with responsibility.

Wisdom demands high standards. Products must be of reliable quality. Advice must be grounded in the best available evidence and honest clinical experience. Safety and interactions must be taken seriously, especially with potent substances like realgar and other medicines. Traditional knowledge must be approached with humility and respect, especially where it stems from Indigenous and local communities. And when we do not yet know something, we must have the courage to say so and to keep learning.

Foresight, in the spirit of Te Paea Hinerangi, Guide Sophia, asks us to look ahead. How will this way of practising pharmacy shape our community in ten or twenty years? How can we help people move from a passive relationship to medicine to an active, conscious participation in their own health journey? How do we support a changing consciousness that is more awake, more responsible, more deeply connected with the living and the spiritual world and with one another?

In a way, the Realgar stone and the Kawakawa Hydrosol show us the path. The stone says: stand at the meeting point of many worlds and hold them together with strength and clarity and serve the good. The Kawakawa says: stay rooted in this land, in relationships that are close and real, be the child of light and make inner freedom your quest. Integrative health will flourish where those two gestures meet: global and local, science and tradition, precision and kindness, spirit and matter, the healing will and the insight in the deeper nature of the human being.

Closing

For this community, having a pharmacy dedicated to integrative health and inspired by Holy Sophia and by Guide Sophia of Lake Tarawera – and by the meeting of Realgar and Kawakawa means having a place where you can bring your whole story – your prescriptions, your questions about supplements, your interest in traditional and anthroposophical remedies, your concerns about long-term side effects, your inner questions about the meaning of illness and healing – and be met with listening, knowledge and integrity.

My hope is that Sophia Pharmacy becomes more than a dispensary. That it becomes a meeting point, a teaching space, and a gentle catalyst for a more humane, more inclusive, more holistic way of doing health care – one conversation at a time. A place where the vision of the World Health Organisation’s TCIM plan, the clarity of training benchmarks in fields like anthroposophical medicine, and the living realities of this community all find expression in the practical, everyday work of a pharmacy.

A place where the light of Holy Sophia – wisdom – and the guiding presence of Te Paea Hinerangi – transforming consciousness rooted in this land – find a modest but real home in how medicines are made and chosen, how people are counselled, and how responsibilities are shared; where minerals from distant mountains and plants from the

New Zealand bush can stand together as symbols of a medicine that truly brings worlds together.

To the founder of Sophia Pharmacy, to you, Nic Parkes: thank you for the courage to imagine something more, and for doing the hard work to make it real. To the clinicians and partners here this afternoon: may this be the start of deeper collaboration across disciplines. And to everyone in the community: this place is for you.

Thank you, and congratulations on this beautiful beginning.

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**Sophia Pharmacy Opening Ceremony
at Te Rae, Hastings 13 February 2026**

