

Historic STEMM Women/M.D.s

Harriot K. Hunt, Honorable M.D. (1805-1875)

Educated in private schools, she became a teacher. She was interested in medicine but was unable to attend medical school as was her brother who earned his M.D. She studied medicine independently and became a medical practitioner treating women and children. After thirteen years, in 1847, she became the first woman to *apply* to a medical school. She was denied admission. Three years later she again petitioned, again to be denied. Further numerous attempts failed her as well. In 1853 she received an honorary degree from the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania. In her 1856 book, *Glances and Glimpses: Or, Fifty Years' Social, Including Twenty Years' Professional Life*, she writes of her inner sorrow from Harvard depriving her knowledge. Her book now sits on a shelf in the Schlesinger Library at Harvard University Medical College.

<http://www.womenhistoryblog.com/2013/04/harriot-kezia-hunt.html>

Elizabeth Blackwell, M.D. (1821-1910)

The first woman to earn a M.D. degree (1849) had been refused admission to several medical schools because of her gender. She found acceptance at The Geneva College of Medicine, a small school in upstate New York. But hers was a hate-filled acceptance process that began with the dean. He put her application directly to his students to decide whether a woman should be allowed to enter classes, stipulating their decision had to be unanimous. He was confident the result would be negative. The students, however, decided it would be a great *joke* and unanimously voted to admit her. Blackwell bravely sat in classrooms filled with these male students. Anticipated unruly incidents at the lectures did not occur, but a genuine respect between the “jokester” male students and their female colleague did. When asked to absent herself from the lecture on the anatomy of the male reproductive system she refused and earned sincere support from her “fellow” students. She passed the qualifying examination with the highest average and graduated as the first American woman to receive a formal medical degree.

<https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/news/schlesinger-newsletter/elizabeth-blackwells-struggle-become-doctor>

Mary Walker, M.D. (1832-1919)

In 1855 at age 21 she graduated Syracuse Medical College, the first medical school to accept women and men equally. She was the only woman in her class and the second American woman to earn a medical degree. Denied enlistment in the US Army, she volunteered receiving no compensation for her surgical work in the Civil War. When captured by Confederate troops, taken hostage and imprisoned for four months, she served as a spy. She became the first female surgeon commissioned in the US Army in 1864. In 1865 she was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. In 1917 the US Congress changed the criteria for the Congressional Medal of Honor and her medal was revoked. In 1977, after family and friends lobbied incessantly for sixty years to have her medal reinstated, President Jimmy Carter did just that.

The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration awarded by the United States

government. In total, 3,475 medals have been awarded to 3,456 people; 3,455 men (of whom nineteen were awarded it twice) and 1 woman.

http://www.history.army.mil/news/2016/160200a_maryEdwardsWalker.html

Marie Zakrzewska, M.D. (1829-1902)

Born in Germany, she wanted to become a physician for which reason she immigrated to the United States. She met and was mentored by Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell who encouraged her to attend the medical school at Western Reserve University from which she graduated M.D. (1856). She founded the New England Hospital for Women and Children where she developed the concept of maintaining medical records to document and keep patient medical histories.

https://books.google.com/books?id=rpuSzowmIkgC&pg=PA769&lpg=PA769&dq=Marie+Elizabeth+Zakrzewska+medical+records&source=bl&ots=gN_mLeYTQC&sig=iRd_WuRdc0vONk21mqZNMQ8sukE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjWkejP89vQAhVS9GMKHRXVB6Q4ChDoAQhTMAY#v=onepage&q=Marie%20Elizabeth%20Zakrzewska%20medical%20records&f=false

Rebecca J. Cole, M.D. (1846-1922)

Her family had been enslaved, oppressed and denied both a decent living and medical care - she became a physician. Graduating from the New England Female Medical College in 1864, she became the first formally trained black female doctor in the United States. She then received her *second* medical degree from the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1867 as its first black graduate. In 1873 with fellow physician Dr. Charlotte Abbey, she opened the Women's Directory Center providing legal and medical services to women and children.

<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/cole-rebecca-j-1846-1922>

Dolores Mercedes Piñero, M.D. (1892–1975)

Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico when the island was still a Spanish colony, and following her primary and secondary education in PR, she went to Boston, became fluent in English, and in 1913 earned her medical degree from Boston's College of Physicians and Surgeons. She was one of the first four Puerto Rican women to earn a medical degree.

<http://www.puertoricoreport.com/dolores-mercedes-pinero-wwi-doctor-pioneer/#.WEn22HeZPeQ>

Alice Hamilton, M.D. (1869-1970)

The first American physician, male or female, to specialize in the medical practice of occupational health did so during the twenty years she lived at Hull-House. In the early 1900s, she scientifically linked many health disabilities to noxious chemical exposure and unsafe working conditions in crude, quickly built factories. As the first director of the Illinois Occupational Disease Commission established in 1910, she conducted a statewide survey in which she inspected over 300 industrial sites and discovered industrial conditions that exposed workers to lead poisoning. Her report impelled the first Illinois law providing workplace health compensation. Extensive reforms followed and in 1970, OSHA was signed into law by then President Richard M. Nixon.

<https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/whatischemistry/landmarks/alicehamilton.html>

Virginia Apgar, M.D. (1909-1974)

After graduating from Mt. Holyoke College with a major in zoology in 1929, she received her M.D. from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons four years later. She graduated fourth in her class of sixty-nine men and three other women. One of the first females to specialize in surgery, Apgar won a surgical internship at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital. But when she completed her residency in 1937, she (women) wasn't welcome to perform surgery. Thus, she entered the emerging field of anesthesia at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where her pioneering contributions raised it from nursing to physician status. But her foremost medical contribution was for children when she devised a newborn scoring system that measured five vital signs at one and five minutes after a newborn's birth. The Apgar Score has saved countless lives and is a standard worldwide. "Every baby born in a modern hospital anywhere in the world is looked at first through the eyes of Virginia Apgar."

<https://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/retrieve/Narrative/CP/p-nid/178>