

Honoring Historic Women in Health Care and Medicine

In honor of National Women's History Month we are recognizing and celebrating the often-overlooked achievements of American women. Part one of our series features five amazing women who have made major contributions to medicine and health care. These women have not only changed the way we view women's role in health care and medicine, but their discoveries and contributions have vastly improved our lives.

Florence Nightingale

is revered as the founder of modern nursing. She was a social reformer and statistician who was called to duty by the British Army to lead a team of 38 nurses during the Crimean War. Her methods improved the unsanitary conditions at the hospital where she worked thereby reducing the death rate by two thirds. In 1860 she established St. Thomas' Hospital and the Nightingale Training School for Nurses, laying the foundation for professional nursing.

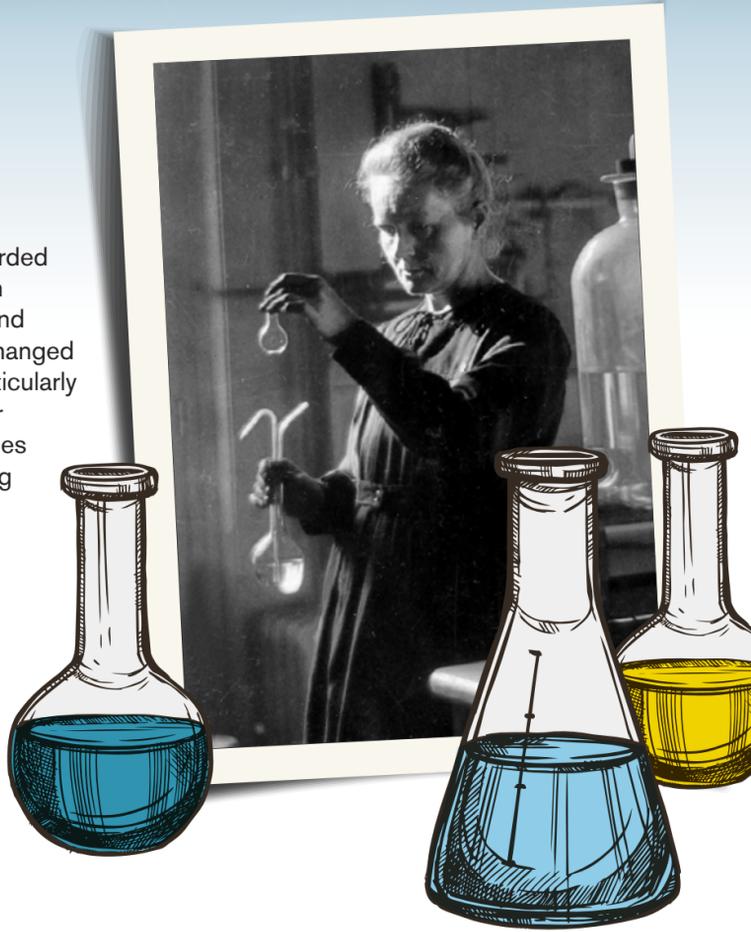


Clara Barton

When the Civil War began in 1861, Barton was a pioneering nurse who brought supplies to Union soldiers, tended to the wounded and later joined Frances Gage in helping to prepare slaves for their lives in freedom. After the war, Barton helped locate and identify the remains of more than 30 thousand missing soldiers to provide proper burials. Upon learning about the International Red Cross during a trip to Switzerland she founded the American Red Cross in 1881.

Marie Curie

The first and still the only woman to be awarded two Nobel Prizes; one in physics and one in chemistry. Her discoveries of radioactivity and elements including radium and polonium, changed diagnostic and therapeutic possibilities particularly in oncology. With her daughter, Irene, at her side, she transported portable X-ray machines to doctors on the battlefield in France during World War I saving countless lives.



Rosalind Franklin

Led groundbreaking work with X-ray diffraction images of DNA, RNA, and viruses as a chemist and X-ray crystallographer. Her crucial contributions in this area led to the discovery of the double helix structures of DNA. After finishing her work on DNA, Franklin later went on to lead pioneering work on the molecular structures of viruses including the tobacco mosaic and the polio virus.

Dr. Gertrude Elion

Developed 45 medical patents, was awarded 23 honorary degrees and was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

She invented various drug treatments for leukemia, gout, malaria, viral herpes and the prevention of kidney transplant rejection.

An American biochemist and pharmacologist, Gertrude won the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1988.

Gertrude's most well known contribution was the first antiretroviral drug to treat AIDS, azidothymidine, known as AZT.

