

Black Medical Pioneers

They changed health care around the world

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Dr. Daniel Hale Williams (1856-1931)

In 1893, Williams performed one of the world's first successful open-heart surgeries, saving the life of a man stabbed in the chest during a bar fight. Williams also opened the first black-owned hospital, Provident Hospital in Chicago, to remedy the lack of decent health care available to black people.

Dr. Louis Tompkins Wright (1891-1952)

A surgeon and activist, Wright created the intradermal (in the skin) method of vaccination against smallpox during World War I. Wright was the first black surgeon to be on a hospital staff in New York City.

Dr. Lena Edwards (1900-1986)

This Howard Medical School graduate was one of the first African-American women to be board-certified as an ob-gyn. Edwards promoted health care rights for poor people and women.

Dr. Charles Drew (1904-1950)

The "father of blood banks," Drew was the first to identify and preserve blood plasma to perform transfusions. He founded the American Red Cross blood bank and, during World War II, organized "Blood for Britain," the world's first blood drive.