

## The state of Black health

Written by

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Chicago, IL (BlackNews.com) -- Earlier this year, President Barack Obama delivered his very first state of the union address, and in one of his key points, he addressed the need for the United States to resume its leadership role in helping cure the global economy. Similarly, African Americans have arrived at a challenging crossroads in health, and are still battling preventable diseases and conditions in shockingly disproportionate numbers. But BlackDoctor.org, (BDO) is addressing this need.

Right on time for the Black History Month celebration, BDO is planning some exciting things to help highlight some of the top achievements in African American medical history, and to identify what steps we need to take next. The below timeline chronicles the road of African American healthcare what we've done, what we're doing now, and what we'll be up to in the future to achieve the ultimate goal: happier, healthier lives!

### Our amazing healthcare journey (so far)

**1721** - Onesimus, an enslaved African, describes to Cotton Mather, an influential American writer and religious leader, the African method of inoculation against smallpox. This technique, later used to protect American Revolutionary War soldiers, is perfected in the 1790's by British doctor Edward Jenner's in the use of a less virulent organism.

**1783** - Dr. James Durham, born into slavery in 1762, buys his freedom and begins his own medical practice in New Orleans, becoming the first "colored" doctor in the United States. As a youngster, he was owned by a number of doctors, who taught him how to read and write, mix medicines, and serve and work with patients. Durham had a flourishing medical practice in New Orleans until 1801, when the city restricted his practice because he did not have a formal medical degree.

**1788** - Dr. James Durham is invited to Philadelphia to meet Dr. Benjamin Rush, who wanted to investigate Durham's reported success in treating patients with diphtheria. Dr. Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and one of America's foremost physicians, was so impressed that he personally read Durham's paper on diphtheria before the College of Physicians of Philadelphia. Durham returned to New Orleans in 1789, where he saved more yellow fever victims than any other physician - during an epidemic that killed thousands, he lost 11 of 64 patients.

**1837** - Dr. James McCune Smith graduates from the University of Glasgow, becoming the first "colored" person to earn a medical degree.

**1852** - The Jackson Street Hospital, in Augusta, GA, is established as the first institution of record solely for the care of "colored" patients. The founders were a group of charitable minded whites led by Dr. Henry Fraser Campbell of the University of Georgia School of Medicine. There was no "colored" staff in this three story structure, which housed fifty beds, operating quarters, and a lecture hall.

**1862** - Freedmen's Hospital is established in Washington, D.C., and is the only federally-funded health care facility for "colored" people in the nation.

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Susie Baker (who later became known as Susie King Taylor), born a slave in Georgia in 1848, becomes the first "colored" U.S. Army nurse during the Civil War. She served in a newly formed regiment of "colored" soldiers, organized at Port Royal Island off the South Carolina coast by Major General David Hunter, commander of the Union's Department of the South. After the war, she helped to organize a branch of the Women's Relief Corps.

**1864** - Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler, the first "colored" female to earn a medical degree, graduates from New England Female Medical College, Boston.

**1867** - Robert Tanner Freeman, born in 1847 to slave parents in North Carolina, is one of the first six graduates in dental medicine from Harvard University, thus becoming the first "colored" man to receive an education in dentistry and a dental degree from an American medical school.

**1868** - Howard University School of Medicine is established in Washington, D.C. to educate "colored" doctors. Notably, the school welcomes both "Negro" and white students, including women.

**1878** - Dr. James Francis Shober earns his M.D. from Howard University School of Medicine and later becomes the first known "colored" physician with a medical degree to practice in North Carolina.

**1879** - Mary Eliza Mahoney becomes the first professional "colored" nurse, graduating from the New England Hospital for Women and Children (Now the Dimock Community Health Center) in Boston.

**1881** - The first school of record for "colored" student nurses is established at Spelman College in Atlanta.

**1891** - Dr. Daniel Hale Williams establishes the Provident Hospital and Training School for Nurses in Chicago, the first "colored"-owned and first interracial hospital in the United States. Dr. Austin Maurice Curtis, Sr. (a Raleigh native) becomes the hospital's first intern.

**1893** - Dr. Daniel Hale Williams performs the first successful operation on a human heart at Provident Hospital. The patient, a victim of a chest stab wound, survived and lived a normal life for twenty years after the operation.

**1895** - The National Medical Association is founded in Atlanta, GA, since "colored" people are barred from other established medical groups.

Dr. Nathan Francis Mossell founds the Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital and Training School for Nurses in Philadelphia, PA.

**1900** - The Washington Society of Colored Dentists, the first organization of "colored" dentists, is founded in Washington, D.C.

**1901** - Dr. Aaron McDuffie Moore convinces Washington Duke to donate money for the

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construction of Lincoln Hospital in Durham, NC.

**1904** - Alois Alzheimer selects five foreign visiting students at the Royal Psychiatric Hospital, University of Munich, as his graduate research assistants, including black Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller. After leaving Germany in 1906, Fuller continued his research on degenerative disorders of the brain and was a widely published pioneer in Alzheimer's disease research. At the time of his death in 1953, the only acknowledgment of his Fuller's work was an Honorary Doctor of Science Degree awarded in 1943 by his alma mater, Livingstone College, Salisbury, NC.

**1908** - The National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (NACGN) is established. (NACGN was dissolved in 1951, when its members voted to merge with the American Nurses Association).

**1912** - Dr. Solomon Carter Fuller, recognized by the American Psychiatric Association as the country's first "Negro" psychiatrist, publishes the first comprehensive clinical review of all Alzheimer's cases that have been reported up to this time. He was the first to translate into English much of Alois Alzheimer's work on the disease.

**1915** - The NAACP awards Dr. Ernest E. Just the first Springarn Medal for his pioneering research on fertilization and cell division.

**1917** - In Camp Upton, NY, Dr. Louis T. Wright, a pioneer in clinical antibiotic research, develops a better technique (intradermal injection) for vaccinating soldiers against smallpox.

**1921** - Dr. Meta L. Christy, a graduate of the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, becomes the world's first "Negro" osteopathic physician.

**1927** - Dr. William Augustus Hinton develops the Hinton Test for diagnosing syphilis in Boston, MA. (He later develops an improved version, the Hinton-Davies Test, in 1931).

**1936** - Dr. William Augustus Hinton's book, Syphilis and Its Treatment, is the first medical textbook written by a Negro to be published.

**1938** - Sara Delaney's article Bibliotherapy in a Hospital is published in the February issue of Opportunity magazine. (Delaney, chief librarian at the U.S. Veteran's Administration Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama, was a pioneer in the use of selected reading to aid in the treatment of patients).

**1940** - Dr. Charles R. Drew presents his thesis, "Banked Blood," at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York. The thesis covers two years of blood research, including the discovery that plasma could replace whole blood transfusions.

**1944** - A group of "Negro" medics land on Utah Beach/Normandy on D-Day + 4, as part of a nine-person, all-"Negro" team of medics, which included two officers. Serving with the 687th and the 530th Medical Detachments, they spent most of the rest of the European campaign attached to the 3rd Army while participating in many of its major actions.

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**1950** - Dr. Helen O. Dickens becomes the first "Negro" woman admitted to the American College of Surgeons.

**1954** - Dr. Peter Murray Marshall is installed as the President of the New York County Medical Society, becoming the first "Negro" to lead a unit of the American Medical Association.

**1964** - Dr. Geraldine Pittman Woods becomes the first black woman appointed to the National Advisory General Medical Services Council. In this position, she addressed the need to improve science education and research opportunities at minority institutions.

**1967** - Dr. Jane C. Wright, pioneer in chemotherapy research and daughter of Dr. Louis T. Wright (see 1917), is appointed an Associate Dean and Professor of Surgery at New York Medical College at the time, the highest post ever attained by a black woman in medical administration.

**1969** - Alfred Day Hershey, PhD., geneticist, becomes the first Black American to share a Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. He received the award for his research on the replication and genetic structure of viruses.

**1975** - Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA, is the only black medical school founded in the United States during the 20th century. Since its establishment, the school has sent more than 700 doctors, mostly black, to provide health care in impoverished parts of the country, especially to poorer black communities where access to medical care has traditionally been in short supply.

Dr. Louis Sullivan, who became the first dean and president of Morehouse School of Medicine, is also noted as the first black male to head the Department of Health & Human Services.

**1978** - Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall becomes the first black President of the American Cancer Society.

**1987** - Dr. Ben Carson, neurosurgeon, leads a seventy-member surgical team at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, MD in the separation of Siamese twins joined at the cranium.

**1990** - Dr. Marilyn Hughes Gaston becomes the first female and first African American to direct a public health service bureau: the Bureau of Primary Health Care in the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Her 1986 study of sickle-cell disease led to a nationwide screening program to test newborns for immediate treatment.

**1991** - Dr. Vivian Pinn is the first female and first African-American woman to be appointed Director of the Office of Research on Women's Health for the National Institutes of Health, which oversees research on women and insures that they are represented in broad clinical trials.

**1992** - Dr. Mae C. Jemison, the first African American female astronaut in NASA history, becomes the first black woman in space, as part of SPACELAB J, a successful joint U.S. and Japanese science mission. A graduate of Cornell University Medical School, Jemison served in

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the Peace Corps as its area medical officer, from 1983 to 1985, in the West African countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

**1993** - Dr. Edward S. Cooper is the first African American elected as National President of the American Heart Association.

Dr. Joycelyn Elders is the first African American to be appointed as U.S. Surgeon General.

Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee is the first African-American woman to be appointed dean of a U.S. medical school (Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine).

**1994** - Reginald Ware publishes Heart & Soul magazine, which is the nation's first healthy lifestyle magazine for African Americans.

**1995** - Dr. Helene Doris Gayle is the first female and first African-American Director of the National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

**1996** - Dr. Ernest E. Just is recognized for his contributions to the biological sciences with a commemorative U.S. Postal Service stamp.

**1997** - Dr. Donna Christian-Christensen is the first female and first African-American female physician in the U.S. Congress.

Drs. Paula Mahone and Karen Drake are members of a team of forty specialists involved in the delivery of the McCaughey septuplets at Iowa Methodist Medical Center.

**1998** - Dr. David Satcher is sworn in as both the Assistant Secretary for Health and U.S. Surgeon General.

**2000** - Dr. Sharon Henry is the first African-American woman to be elected into membership as a fellow in the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma.

The nation's largest group of African-American physicians, the National Medical Association (NMA), charge that many managed care plans effectively discriminate against them

**2002** - Dr. Roselyn Payne Epps is the first African-American woman to serve as President of the American Medical Women's Association.

**2005** - Reginald Ware creates BlackDoctor.org as the nation's first health website dedicated to the culturally specific health and wellness needs of African Americans.

About BlackDoctor.org

Chicago-based BlackDoctor.org ([www.blackdoctor.org](http://www.blackdoctor.org)) is the leading resource for African-American health, nutrition, weight loss, fitness information and online communities in the United States. In addition to providing culturally-accurate health solutions, BDO maintains the

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largest database of African American physicians and dentists in the nation and over 10,000 articles addressing health related issues of the African American community. [BlackDoctor.org](http://BlackDoctor.org): Your trusted daily resource for healthier, happier living.