A Tribute to the First Woman Physician Who Changed the Face of Medicine

Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell
(Feb 3, 1821-May 31, 1910)

- Elizabeth was born in Bristol, England. She was the third daughter of nine surviving children of her parents. The sudden demise of her father and death of her close friend pushed her to pursue a career in medicine.

- She started applying in various medical institutions but her application was continuously getting rejected. Whereas, she was accepted at Geneva Medical College in New York.

- During her college life, Blackwell faced many discrimination and obstacles by her fellow students and professors. She was forced to sit separately at lectures and often excluded from labs.

- But she graduated first in her class and she became the First woman to receive a Doctor of Medicine in 1849.

- After her studies, she got trained in midwifery at Paris. Then she returned to her native England and learned under Sir James Paget at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Where she met Florence Nightingale, a famous nurse and they became very close friends.

- In 1850, she started a small dispensary to treat poor women in New York city, which became the Medical School for Women in 1868 with the support of her sister Dr. Emily Blackwell and colleague Dr. Marie.

- Further, during the American-Civil War, both the Blackwell sisters trained many nurses for their service in war field. As well as Dr. Blackwell also helped to establish the U. S. Sanitary Commission in 1861.

- Later, she established the London School of Medicine for Women at London with the primary goal of preparing women for medical education. There she became a Professor of Gynaecology and became the first woman listed on the British Medical Register.

- In order to honour her meritorious service, the American Medical Women's Association has introduced the award Elizabeth Blackwell Medal in 1939 to present annually to a woman who has made significant contribution in medicine.

- In fact, Dr. Blackwell battled all her life time as a social reformer and for women's rights. As well as, she was a great visionary in paving the path for numerous women in promoting women education in the field of medicine

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