

DR. CHARLES DREW

LIFESPAN CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

WHO WAS DR. CHARLES DREW?

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1904 to parents Richard and Nora, Drew's childhood and much of his young adulthood centered around sports. Drew was known, and sometimes is still known, for his athleticism and talents at swimming, football, basketball, and other sports. He had hopes of becoming an electrical engineer, as he stated in his high school yearbook. He graduated from Dunbar High School in 1922 which was the first high school in the U.S. to serve African American students. He went on to Amherst College on a sports scholarship, but after a football injury left him hospitalized and his sister died from tuberculosis, he became interested in medicine. While saving money for medical school, Drew worked as a biology teacher and a coach and eventually applied, was accepted, and graduated from McGill University in Montreal. Drew earned both his medical and surgery degree. After his father passed and Dr. Drew returned to the U.S., he became an instructor at Howard University's medical school and earned his doctorate from Columbia University in 1940, specializing his research in blood plasma. His seminal dissertation was entitled "Banked Blood: A Study in Blood Preservation". Drew was the first African American to earn a medical doctorate from Columbia.



Born: June 3, 1904

Died: April 1, 1950

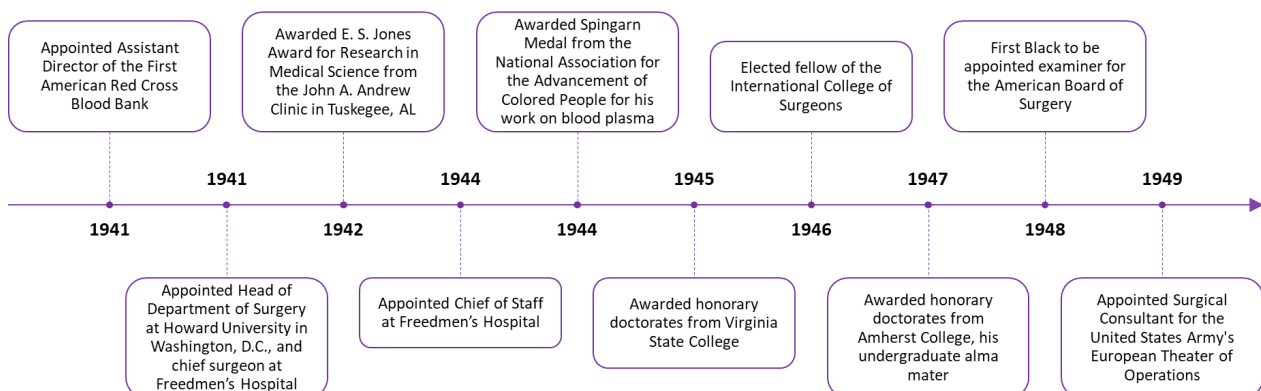
"FATHER OF THE BLOOD BANK"

On top of his medical achievements, Dr. Drew led the way in the criticisms of policies that excluded African Americans from donating blood. These policies had no scientific basis, not to mention the racism behind them. The policy was modified, but donated blood was still separated between its white and black donors as it had been done throughout the war. He was also dedicated to training young African American surgeons, campaigned against the exclusion of black physicians from local medical societies, medical specialty organizations, and the American Medical Association.

While earning his doctorate, Drew was prevented from the privileges enjoyed by his white peers, privileges that included direct access to patients. This led to his fellowship work under John Scudder instead of surgeon Allen Whipple, where Drew worked with Scudder to set up an experimental blood bank. All of this work afforded Dr. Drew the opportunity to lead the "Blood for Britain" project, as Britain was under attack by Germany and in need of blood and plasma to treat military and civilian casualties. Dr. Drew worked with a team of professionals from other hospitals and instituted procedures for collecting blood and processing blood plasma for transfusions at the participating hospitals. In 1941, Dr. Drew was appointed assistant director of a pilot program for a national blood banking system, sponsored by the National Research Council and the American Red Cross.

In 1941, Dr. Drew was appointed to assistant director of the American Red Cross and National Blood Donor Service, paving the way to mass produce dried plasma and "bloodmobiles" - mobile blood donation trucks with refrigerators.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & LEGACY



"While one must grant at once that extraordinary talent, great intellectual strength and unusual opportunity are necessary to break out of this prison of the Negro problem, we believe that the Negro in the field of physical sciences has not only opened a small passageway to the outside world, but is carving a road in many untrod areas, along which later generations will find it more easy to travel. The breaching of these walls and the laying of this road has not been, and is not easy."

- Dr. Charles Drew

SOURCES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

<https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/whatischemistry/african-americans-in-sciences/charles-richard-drew.html>

<https://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/spotlight/bg/feature/biographical-overview>

<https://www.ajc.com/news/charles-drew-doctor-was-a-pioneer-in-storing-blood/CVMJV6MSE5GNXLV5RC7NS3QEPE/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zx_ZCp8_ibs