

African American Achievements in Medicine and Science

We hope that our previous presentations during Black History Month have both informed and inspired you. In this section, we continue our reflection by highlighting the remarkable accomplishments of African American physicians, scientists, and researchers. These innovators have advanced healing, expanded scientific knowledge, and strengthened the health of communities across the nation. Their work exemplifies a profound commitment to human dignity, justice, and the flourishing of all God's people. Today, we honor their invaluable contributions and celebrate the gifts they continue to offer our world.

A Century of Innovation and Service

2020s – Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett-Helaire

Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett-Helaire, an assistant professor of immunology and infectious diseases at Harvard University, played a pivotal role in the development of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. As a member of the National Institutes of Health team, Dr. Corbett contributed to the creation of mRNA-1273, which was subsequently used by Moderna, Inc. The vaccine demonstrated 94.1% effectiveness in Phase 3 clinical trials and has been approved for use in multiple countries. With 15 years of research experience on viruses such as dengue, RSV, influenza, and coronaviruses, Dr. Corbett has earned several prestigious awards for her work.

2000s – Dr. Hadiyah Nicole Green

Dr. Hadiyah Nicole Green has advanced innovative cancer treatments using laser-activated nanoparticles, bringing new hope for targeted therapies. She is renowned for her work in cancer therapy, precision medicine, immunotherapy, and nanotechnology.

1990s – Dr. Joycelyn Elders

Dr. Joycelyn Elders was appointed the first African American U.S. Surgeon General. In this role, she championed public health, education, and wellness, particularly for underserved communities.

1980s – Dr. Alexa Canady

Dr. Alexa Canady became the first African American woman neurosurgeon in the United States. She dedicated her career to serving children with compassion and excellence, breaking barriers, and saving countless lives.

1970s – Dr. Patricia Bath

Dr. Patricia Bath was a groundbreaking ophthalmologist, innovative research scientist, and advocate for blindness prevention, treatment, and cures. She invented the laserphaco probe, a device and technique used to remove cataracts. As the founder of the non-profit American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness and the first Black female physician to receive a medical patent, Dr. Bath's inspiring legacy continues through "community ophthalmology," which addresses threatening eye conditions in historically underserved communities.

1960s – Dr. Samuel Kountz

Dr. Samuel Kountz made significant contributions in the field of kidney transplantation, as well as in research, discoveries, and inventions related to renal science. He performed groundbreaking kidney transplants and advocated for equitable organ donation practices.

1950s – Dr. Jane Cooke Wright

Dr. Jane Cooke Wright was a pioneer in chemotherapy research. Her leadership transformed cancer treatment and expanded access to care. She is particularly noted for developing the technique of using human tissue culture, rather than laboratory mice, to test the effects of potential drugs on cancer cells.

1940s – Dr. Charles Drew, "Father of the Blood Bank"

Dr. Charles Drew was a prominent physician, surgeon, and medical researcher who revolutionized the field of blood transfusion. He developed techniques for the long-term preservation of blood plasma, laying the foundation for the establishment of large-scale blood banks. His innovations saved countless lives during World War II and continue to have a lasting impact.

As we honor these trailblazers, we remember that the call to heal is a sacred one. Their perseverance in the face of adversity echoes the Gospel message of hope, justice, and care for the most vulnerable. Their achievements remind us that scientific discovery and faith-filled service can work together to uplift the human family.