

Women Physicians Who Changed the Course of American Medicine

Steven Rourke | February 3, 2017

[Contributor Information](#) | [References](#)



< 13 of 16 >



Dr Patricia Bath (1942-)

Patricia Bath, MD, has dedicated her career to helping the underserved, in part by creating the field of community ophthalmology. This new discipline, grounded in public health, community medicine, and clinical ophthalmology, has proven to be a model for health practitioners around the world.

Dr Bath can also include laser scientist and inventor in her list of accomplishments. In 1986 she created Laserphaco, a novel device and approach to cataract surgery. She has registered several patents for medical devices^[33-35] and was also the first female chair of an ophthalmology residency program in the United States (Drew-UCLA, 1983).

After obtaining her MD at Howard University and her fellowship in ophthalmology at Columbia University, Dr Bath conducted an influential epidemiologic study showing that, due to a lack of access to medical care, black persons had double the rate of blindness compared with whites.^[33]

In 1977, Dr Bath, with colleagues Dr Alfred Cannon and Dr Aaron Ifekwunigwe, founded the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness "to protect, preserve, and restore the gift of sight."