2nd Historic teaser: Medical women in the second world war and later (1939 - 1948)

The third decade of MWIA's 100-year history was important in many respects. It marked crucial events in world history and for medical women in Europe and North America in particular. The world witnessed the beginning of the second world war in 1939. It was also the year the War Office in England agreed to appoint medical women with equal pay and allowance as medical men. The commissions were not granted immediately but it was a milestone for women doctors. By 1940, the Medical Register in Britain had 6300 women. Advances also happened in other parts of the world. In 1941, women were given temporary appointments by the Indian Medical Service. Two years later, Margaret Craighilll became the first female doctor to enter the US Military in 1943 (picture to the left, (Wiki Commons)). By 1944 due to

sustained public pressure the government in Britain decided to allocate public funds only to universities that accepted a reasonable proportion of women. Similar trends followed in the US and in 1945 Harvard Medical School started to admit women. The picture below shows the first batch of women to be admitted in Harvard Medical School, 1945 (copyright: Courtesy of the History of Medicine Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Harvard Medical School).

In 1946, the British Medical Association council appointed the first women members. On the other hand, in Britain after the end of the war many medical universities closed doors for female students again.

There had been no MWIA meeting for 9 years. In 1947, the fifth MWIA Congress was congregated in Amsterdam consisting of 350 members

with the theme: *What are the responsibilities of Medical Women in the Reconstruction of the World, as Physicians, Social Workers, Internationalists?* It was also the year Gerty Cori became the first female doctor to win the Nobel Prize in the category of medicine and physiology in 1947 (picture to the left (Wiki Commons)). The National Health Service (NHS) was established in England in 1948. It promised free access to healthcare with consideration to women. Inauguration of the NHS catalysed educational reforms which required universities to accept a reasonable proportion of female students again.

Join me in looking out for the account of the next decade and see which other countries blazed the trail for women in medicine.

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