The Australian
Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6468

Jorgensen, Lily Agnes

Occupation Anaesthetist, Medical practitioner

Details

Lily Agnes Smith completed a science course at the University of Queensland in 1919. Her scores qualified her for medicine at the University of Sydney. Instead, she moved to Melbourne so she could simultaneously study medicine at the University of Melbourne, and art at the National Gallery of Victoria Art School.

Months shy of completing her medical degree, she married fellow art student Justus Jörgensen, and the pair immediately moved to France to live the bohemian life of artists. She became ill while travelling and was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

The pair moved again, this time to London, so Jörgensen could complete her medical studies. She enrolled at the London School of Medicine for Women in 1926. Jörgensen was to be the bread-winner, allowing Justus to concentrate on his art.

In 1928 they returned to Australia. Jörgensen secured an anaesthetist's position at Melbourne's St Vincent's Hospital in 1929, becoming the hospital's first woman anaesthetist. A severe relapse of multiple sclerosis saw her resign in 1933. She moved into private practice, closer to home, with a focus on contraception and psychoanalysis.

In supporting her husband's art practice, Dr Lily Jörgensen also supported the building and development of Australia's oldest artists' colony, Montsalvat.

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