Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0065

Brown, Vera Scantlebury

(1889 - 1946)

Born	18890807, Linton Victoria Australia
Died	19460714
Occupation	Doctor, Medical practitioner, Paediatrician

Summary

Vera Scantlebury Brown, commonly known as Dr Vera, was appointed the first Director of Infant Welfare for the Victorian Department of Health in 1926. She remained dedicated to this position until her death. The position was only part-time due to her marriage, a custom of the time when it was considered that married women did not need to work outside the home. Vera Santlebury Brown was honoured with her appointment as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire on 9 June 1938 for her work in the fields of infant and maternal welfare.

Details

Vera Scantlebury, the daughter of George James and Catherine Millington (née Baynes) Scantlebury, was educated at Toorak College before entering medical school at the University of Melbourne. She graduated Bachelor of Medicine (MB) in 1914 and became resident medical officer at the Melbourne Hospital. Dr Vera then moved to the Children's Hospital in 1915, where she was appointed senior medical officer before leaving for England in 1917. In England she was attached to the Endell Street Military Hospital.

Dr Vera returned to Victoria in 1919 and worked in a variety of honorary positions including: honorary anaesthetist at the Women's Hospital (1920-1922), honorary clinical assistant at the Children's Hospital (1920-1924), Honorary physician and surgeon at the Queen Victoria Hospital (1920-1926) and medical inspector Church of England Girls' Grammar School (1920-1946). Dr Vera also was associated with the Victorian Baby Health Centres Association and the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria. In 1921, Dr Vera was appointed part-time medical officer in charge of the city baby health centres and in 1924 she was became a doctor of medicine. In 1925, together with Dr Henrietta Main, she was sent by the Victorian Government to conduct a survey of the welfare of women and children in New Zealand and Victoria. Their report led to the establishment of the Infant Welfare Division in the Department of Public Health.

Dr Vera married University of Melbourne lecturer (later associate professor) Dr Edward Byam Brown on 18 September 1926, and they had two children. A month following her marriage she accepted the appointment of part-time director of the newly formed Infant Welfare Division. She remained in this position until her death. In 1937, following Dr Vera's report on infant welfare for the National Health and Research Council, the Commonwealth Government allocated 100,000 pounds for the benefit of pre-school children, from the Coronation Commemoration Grant. *The Argus* newspaper reported on 15 July 1946, in an article 'Death of Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown'
'In 1938 the Australian Association of Pre-School Child Development was established, together with the Lady Gowrie Child Centres. The splendid preventive work carried out at these centres in all states was largely the result of Dr Scantlebury Brown's efforts. She received an OBE in 1938 in recognition of her distinguished work in preventive medicine.
'In 1944 pre-school activities including payment of subsidies to free kindergartens were also placed under her supervision, and her vision and enthusiasm achieved a further success in 1945, when the State Government decided to bring under the Health Department the care of expectant mothers and all children to six years of age.'

Vera Scantlebury Brown died on 14 July 1946, after a long battle with cancer. She is buried in the Cheltenham cemetery.

Events

1925 - 1925
Appointed with Dr Henrietta Main, by the Victoria Government, to report on the welfare of Victorian women and children

1917 - 1919
Attached Royal Army Medical Corps, Endell Street Military Hospital, London, England

1924 - 1924
Awarded degree of doctor of medicine

1926 - 1946
Director of Infant Welfare Victoria at Department of Public Health

1920 - 1922
Honorary Anaesthetist of the Women’s Hospital, Melbourne

1920 - 1924
Honorary Clinical Assistant, Children’s Hospital, Melbourne

1920 - 1926
Honorary physician and surgeon, Queen Victoria Hospital, Melbourne

2001 - 2001
Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

1920 - 1946
Medical Inspector, Church of England Grammar School, Melbourne

1921 - 1921
Part-time medical officer in charge of city baby health centres

1915 - 1917
Resident Medical Officer and Senior Medical Officer of the Children’s Hospital Melbourne

1914 - 1915
Resident Medical Officer of the Melbourne Hospital

1920 - 1920
Resident Medical Officer of the Women’s Hospital, Melbourne

Published resources

Book
A guide to the care of the young child, infant and pre-school ages: for students of infant welfare, Brown, Vera Scantlebury, 1947

Pre-school child : "model exhibit" of sample toys and occupations for children of different ages up to 5 years of age, Brown, Vera Scantlebury, [1943]

The Royal Children's Hospital: A History of Faith, Science and Love, Yule, Peter

'This Mad Folly!': The History of Australia's Pioneer Women Doctors, Hutton Neve, Marjorie, 1980

Australian nurses since Nightingale 1860-1990, Burchill, Elizabeth, 1992

Journal Article
Obituary, Vera Scantlebury Brown, Graham, H Boyd, 1946

Newspaper Article
Death of Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown, 1946

Edited Book
Who's Who in Australia 1944, Alexander, Joseph A, 1944

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988,
https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20071105022623/http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/78644/20071105-1315/www.200australianwo

Double Time: Women in Victoria - 150 Years, Lake, Marilyn and Kelly, Farley, 1985

Resource Section
Brown, Vera Scantlebury (1889 - 1946), Biographical Entry, 2002,
http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/biogs/P001348b.htm

Scantlebury Brown, Vera (1889-1946), Campbell, Kate, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110543b.htm

Resource
Where are the Women in Australian science?, Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, 2003,
http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/wisa/wisa.html

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

Archival resources

Public Record Office Victoria, Victorian Archives Centre
Maternal and Child Health Services (Infant Welfare) Reports

Maternal and Child Health Services (Infant Welfare) Publications and Resources

Maternal and Child Health Service (Infant Welfare) Photographic Collection

National Library of Australia
[Biographical cuttings on Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

The University of Melbourne Archives
Scantlebury Brown, Vera (1889-1956)

Papers and Memorabilia of Vera Scantlebury Brown

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