

Prominent African Americans in Veterinary Medicine



FEBRUARY: BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson



Frederick Douglass Patterson (1901-1988) was one of the most influential Black veterinarians in U.S. history. Orphaned before he was two years of age and raised by an older sister who encouraged him to get an education, Patterson received his veterinary degree from Iowa State University (1923) and PhD from Cornell (1932). After becoming president of Tuskegee Institute (now University) in 1935, he overcame tremendous obstacles to establish a veterinary college for Black students at a time when higher education in the South was generally segregated and there were only about 12 veterinary colleges in the country.

Though his contributions to veterinary medicine represent worthy lifetime achievements, more Americans recognize his name as the organizer of the United Negro College Fund which was incorporated in 1944. To veterinarians and animal lovers everywhere, we can pay tribute to a DVM the next time we hear the well-known phrase, "*A mind is a terrible thing to waste*". Patterson also helped establish the Tuskegee Airmen program during his tenure as president. A year before his death on June 23, 1987 Ronald Reagan awarded Dr. Patterson with the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Dr. Eugene W. Adams



Dr. Adams became a part of the Tuskegee faculty in 1947. His first teaching assignment was in the Department of Large Animal Medicine and Surgery. In 1948 he transferred to the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology to assist Dr. Bowie in teaching the courses offered by the department. Following his appointment as department head in 1955, he was granted educational leave to enter the graduate program at Cornell University. After completing his graduate work, Dr. Adams returned to Tuskegee as head of the Department of Pathology and Parasitology and introduced the "case method" in the teaching of pathology in which students began to early associate pathologic anatomy with abnormal physiology. Dr. Adams served as associate dean until the summer of 1983 when he was appointed vice provost and director, international programs for Tuskegee University.

Dr. Ralieg H. Allen

Dr. Allen was the first African American to pass the three-day certification examination and be licensed as a Veterinarian in the State of Florida. He was also the first African American Veterinarian in the State of Florida.

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Dr. Alfonza Atkinson

Dr. Atkinson was a three-time graduate of Tuskegee University, earning a BS in biology in 1967, a BS in agriculture in 1971, and the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in 1973. Dr. Atkinson was dean of the Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1999. Dr. Atkinson presided as principal investigator over the college's multi-million-dollar Centers of Excellence in Minority Medical Education Grant. From 1997 through 2004, the veterinary medical school received \$21.9 million to help underrepresented minorities prepare for veterinary medical careers.

Dr. Wendell O. Belfield

Dr. Belfield owned and operated the first veterinary hospital to practice orthomolecular medicine. Dr. Belfield also used large doses sodium ascorbate therapy to treat high fevers and distemper. The dose level was begun at one-half gram twice daily per pound of body weight administered intravenously. With dosages this high, Dr. Belfield uses the sodium ascorbate form of Vitamin C as opposed to the ascorbic acid form. The intravenous preparations used were made from crystals to avoid sodium bisulphate, a preservative in the commercially available intravenous products, which can cause nerve problems when given at high dosages. He published his first professional paper with results in 1967. Dr. Belfield and his colleagues are challenging traditional veterinary practices. They are introducing completely new methods of overcoming diseases. These methods are controversial and many scientists question the validity of these practices.

Dr. Michael Blackwell

Dr. Blackwell graduated from Tuskegee University with a Bachelors Degree in 1973 and D.V.M. in 1975 followed by a Master's in Public Health in 1981 from Loma Linda University and Certification in Epidemiology from the US Public Health Service. Dr. Blackwell spent several years in private practice in Oklahoma prior to joining the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine in 1977. In February 1999, he was named Chief of Staff, Office of the Surgeon General. In 2000, following a 23 year career in public health in which he attained the rank of Assistant Surgeon General of the US Public Health Service, he was appointed dean of the University Of Tennessee College Of Veterinary Medicine.



Dr. Walter C. Bowie

Dr. Bowie was appointed head of the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at Tuskegee University in 1947. In 1964, he was elected president of the American Association of Veterinary Physiologists and Pharmacologists. Dr. Bowie collaborated with Dr. Hawthorne, liaison to establish a Large Animal Cardiovascular Center in the veterinary school in 1964. The center was funded by the National Institutes of Health and brought to the campus a number of the leading cardiovascular specialists and scientists in related disciplines to participate in studies on the movement of the mitral valve and to perform surgical procedures in open-heart surgery on the horse. Dr. Bowie earned a D.V.M. degree from Kansas State in 1947. In 1972 he was named dean of Tuskegee

University's School of Veterinary Medicine.



Dr. John Brown

Dr. Brown was the first black veterinarian to earn his D.V.M. degree at Kansas State. Dr. Brown was head of the Division of Agricultural Instruction at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, during 1912 and 1913. He served in the U.S. Army as a first lieutenant.

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Dr. James Courtney

Dr. Courtney was the first African-American to receive an undergraduate degree from Texas A&M and in 1970 he was also the first to receive a DVM degree from Texas A&M. After graduation Dr. Courtney went into private practice as a veterinarian in Compton, CA. He later joined the USDA's Meat and Poultry Inspection program as inspector in charge. He became FSIS circuit supervisor in Kansas City, assistant area supervisor in Albany, N.Y., and Baton Rouge, La; and area supervisor in Jefferson City, Mo. He was named district manager for the newly created district of Dallas in 1997.

Dr. Roger D. Estep

Dr. Estep earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Tuskegee Institute in 1962. Dr. Estep served as an Instructor of Poultry Husbandry at Pennsylvania State College from 1957 to 1958. In 1970, he became executive assistant to the vice president for health affairs at Howard University and in 1971, executive assistant to the president. Since 1967, he has been a member of the Board of Directors of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science and of its Executive Committee. He serves or has served on several federal councils or committees, including the Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Committee of the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr. E. B. Evans

Dr. Evans was the first dean of Tuskegee Institute. He was also the college veterinarian and director of the Department of Agriculture at Prairie View College, Texas. Dr. Evans recruited the first eight veterinary college faculty members to Tuskegee in 1945. Out of the eight faculty members three were graduates from the Kansas State College of Veterinary Medicine: Drs. Thomas G. Perry (KSC 1921), Theodore S. Williams (KSC 1935), Lloyd B. Mobiley (KSC 1938), Eugene W. Adams (KSC 1944), Raymond C. Williams (KSC 1946), Walter C. Bowie (KSC 1947), and Earl H. Brown (KSC 1947). Thomas G. Perry (KSC 1921).



Dr. Lila Miller

Dr. Miller graduated from Cornell University with a DVM and BS in Animal Science. She is currently Veterinary Advisor and a Vice President of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal. Dr. Miller has over 25 years experience working in the field of shelter medicine. She is the coeditor of the textbook, Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff and a contributing author to the publication, "Recognizing and Reporting Animal Abuse, a Veterinarian's Guide".



Dr. Lloyd B. Mobiley

Dr. Mobiley served in the Federal Meat Inspection Service and was an officer in the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps during World War II. He was appointed head of the Department of Anatomy at Tuskegee. One of Dr. Mobiley's greatest contributions was to introduce the use of the intramedullary pin and other devices in the repair of long-bone fractures.

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Dr. Evan Morse

Dr. Morse graduated from Tuskegee University and was one of the first African-American veterinarians in Ohio. Dr. Morse has owned and operated the Warrenville Animal Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio since 1972. In 1974, he co-founded the Free Animal Clinic of Cleveland. Dr. Morse has been actively involved in many of the major cultural and civic organizations in Greater Cleveland. He was recently featured in the national PBS series, Nature. In 2004 Dr. Morse was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association. Dr. Morse is presently a candidate for the Master's Degree in Diversity Management at Cleveland State University.

Dr. Phillip Nelson

Dr. Nelson graduated from Tuskegee University in 1979 receiving his DVM degree. Dr. Nelson was Head of the Department of Small Animal Medicine and Surgery at Tuskegee University's School of Veterinary Medicine. In 1994, he was selected as Associate Dean for the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University. He is presently the Executive Associate Dean for the Pre-clinical Program at the Western University's College of Veterinary Medicine in Pomona, CA.



Dr. Thomas G. Perry

Dr. Perry practiced in Wichita, Kansas, for twenty-four years and was recognized as one of the leading small animal practitioners in the state

Dr. Debbye Turner

Dr. Turner graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia in May 1991 with a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture in May 1986 from Arkansas State University. Dr. Turner was crowned Miss America in 1990. Since 2001, Dr. Turner has been a broadcast journalist contributor to the CBS television program The Early Show. Her Life Matters (formerly known as, Yikes, I'm a Grown Up!) segment offers perspectives on the pleasures and perils of being an adult. She has also appeared on Pet Planet, the Early Show, Saturday Early Show, Show Me St. Louis, and she has hosted The Gentle Doctor.

Dr. Booker T. Washington

Dr. Washington founded Tuskegee Institute in 1881.

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Dr. Raymond C. Williams

Dr. Williams was department head in the College of Veterinary Medicine at Tuskegee University in 1950 and was selected to be an assistant veterinarian by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. He spent the summer aboard ship administering health care to some seven hundred head of livestock on a transoceanic voyage to Poland.



Dr. Theodore S. Williams

Dr. Williams began his veterinary medical career in private practice in Kansas City, Kansas and served on the faculty at Prairie View College, Texas, as assistant veterinarian. He was employed by the Federal Meat Inspection Service, United States Department of Agriculture in Des Moines, Iowa. He was also appointed head of the Department of Pathology and Parasitology at Tuskegee.



Kirkse L. Cur,

Dr Cur, a native of Kentucky, was Cornell's first African-American veterinary graduate. After receiving his DVM in 1912, he entered the medical school at the University of Pennsylvania and spent the remainder of his professional career as a practicing physician at the Frederick Douglass Memorial Hospital in Philadelphia.

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"A mind is a terrible thing to waste"

-----United Negro College Fund,
Co-founded by Dr. Frederick Douglass Patterson



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