

## Who?

In 1865, **Elizabeth Garrett Anderson** became the first woman in Britain to qualify as a physician.<sup>1</sup>

She had been refused entry to medical school and was repeatedly denied formal training. Through private study, she secured licensure via the **Society of Apothecaries** before that route was closed to other women.

She went on to found the **New Hospital for Women in London**, later named the **Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital**, creating a space in which women could practice medicine, and patients could seek care without social constraint. She was also active in the **women's suffrage movement**, and in 1908, became England's first woman mayor when she was elected Mayor of Aldeburgh.

## Her Legacy

Her success benefitted not only the women who followed her into medicine but also the patients who gained greater access to care. Today, women with strong biomedical backgrounds contribute across research, analysis, and health system evaluation. Their presence reflects a professional landscape that earlier generations fought to open.

## References

1. <https://www.suffrageresources.org.uk/resource/3202/elizabeth-garrett-anderson>



*Elizabeth Garrett Anderson*  
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## Why?

I am highlighting Dr. Garrett Anderson on **International Women's Day** because her achievement was not merely symbolic. By insisting on entry into a closed profession, she changed the structure of British medicine. Her decision expanded who could train, who could practice, and ultimately who could access care.

The systems we work within today were shaped by individuals such as Dr Garrett Anderson, who challenged exclusion at its source and remind us that the actions of one woman can exert a permanent legacy.

## Author's Comments

International Women's Day is an opportunity to recognize that structural change often begins with one individual choosing not to accept the limits imposed upon them.

Dr. Garrett Anderson sought the right to practice, not simply individual recognition. Her choices and tenacity continue to shape medicine and, by extension, population health.