Dr Mary Gordon

To the Editor: We are researching and writing a book on my late aunt, Dr Mary Gordon. When she immigrated to South Africa (SA) from England in 1917, she became the first woman doctor to be appointed to Johannesburg Hospital. She was later to establish a large private practice in Johannesburg while also teaching at the then newly founded medical school at the University of the Witwatersrand, where she remained one of the members of staff until 1946.

During World War II Dr Gordon enlisted in the South African Medical Corps, serving as the Officer Commanding, Medical Division, Cottesloe Military Hospital, and then as a physician at No. 110 Military Hospital, Roberts Heights (Voortrekkerhoogte), where she was promoted to major. After her discharge from the army in 1946 she went to Palestine, where she served in various medical capacities.

Dr Gordon returned to SA in 1958 and established a clinic for children at the Bluegill Waters farm school, one of the first of its kind in the country, while also serving as a medical officer at the Tladi and Senoane children's clinics, Soweto, and heading the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Tara Hospital. She practised until she died in the very week of her retirement at the age of 80, in 1971.

During her long and distinguished career as a pioneering woman doctor in SA, Dr Gordon interacted with many across her profession and in the broader community. We would very much appreciate hearing from anyone who is willing to share their memories of her, and such contributions will no doubt significantly enhance the telling of the story of this remarkable woman.

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This month in the *SAMJ* ...



Dr Graham Howarth* qualified as a doctor at Stellenbosch University, went on to qualify as an obstetrician and gynaecologist there, and subsequently completed their master's in bioethics. Before moving to the UK, where he works for the Medical Protection Society as a full-time medicolegal advisor and is now Head of Medical Services – Africa, he was an associate professor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Pretoria and was also founding head of the faculty's Bioethics Department.

*Howarth GR, Goolab B, Dunn RN, Fieggen AG. Public somnambulism: Public lack of awareness of the consequences of increasing medical negligence litigation. S Afr Med J 2014;104(11):752-753. [http://dx.doi.org/10.7196/SAMJ.8568]



Dr Juanita Becker* completed her 2-year medical internship at George Provincial Hospital in the Western Cape and is currently a community service medical officer at Knysna Provincial Hospital. She completed her MB ChB at the University of Cape Town, graduating top of her class. This is her third publication in *SAMJ*, her first having been as a 5th-year medical student. Juanita has a special interest in public health and developing world medicine, and hopes to do an MSc in global health at Oxford University in the future.

*Becker J, Jenkins LS, De Swardt M, Sayed R, Viljoen M. Appropriateness of computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging scans in the Eden and Central Karoo districts of the Western Cape Province, South Africa. S Afr Med J 2014;104(11):762-765. [http://dx.doi.org/10.7196/SAMJ.8158]