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# Pioneers on Stamps: Obstetrics and Gynaecology

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Medicine and Stamps have almost a similar timeline of evolution. What started as a means of confirming the legitimacy of letters and communication paraphernalia, soon evoked the intrigue of collectors. There have been considerable literature on the stamps commemorating cardiology, anaesthesia, surgery, orthopedics and anatomy. However, owing to Gynecology and Obstetrics staying semi professional prior to the early 19th Century, stamps have been rare and few, and only modern practices have been well documented. Stamps dedicated to the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology have typically been issued to honor pioneers, commemorate important facilities, announce advancements and innovations, and memorialize important meetings and conferences in the field.

#### **Ephraim McDowell (1771-1830)**

Ephraim McDowell, an American frontier physician, performed the first successful removal of an ovarian tumor in the world in 1809. All attempts of laparotomy before 1809 had resulted in death due to peritonitis. McDowell emphasized working "neat and clean" and also removed blood from the abdominal cavity during the operation and irrigated the intestines with warm water. He has been called "the father of oophorectomy" and "the father of abdominal surgery". In 1959, the United States Postal Service commemorated McDowell with a 4-cent stamp and 6 First Day Covers, depicting his portrait, mentioning him as a pioneer surgeon, and honoring his memory on the 150th anniversary of the first successful abdominal operation.

#### **Stamp profile:**

- **Issue Date:** December 3, 1959
- **City:** Danville, Kentucky
- **Printed By:** Bureau of Engraving and Printing
- **Printing Method:** Rotary Press
- **Perforations:** 10 ½ x 11
- **Color:** Rose lake



#### **Ignaz Semmelweis (1818-1865)**

Ignaz Semmelweis, a Hungarian physician who lived from 1818 to 1865, made a groundbreaking discovery regarding the transmission of puerperal sepsis, a common and often fatal infection in the mid-19th century. He found that by requiring healthcare workers to wash their hands with chlorine solutions, the incidence and mortality rate of this infection could be drastically reduced, earning him the moniker "savior of mothers." To commemorate his contributions, Hungary issued several stamps



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honoring Semmelweis. A 4-Hungarian Forint stamp featured his portrait in ultramarine, a color symbolizing holiness and humility. Another stamp, valued at 20 Hungarian Forints, released in 1954, depicted Semmelweis standing with a newborn baby against an olive brown background illustrating a puerperal scene, with a mother reaching out from her bed and a water pan for handwashing in line with antiseptic practices. In 1965, Hungary marked the 100th anniversary of his death with a stamp designed by Sandor Legrady, portraying Semmelweis in red-brown and featuring the "Rod of Asclepius" in the upper left corner, a symbol representing medicine and healing.

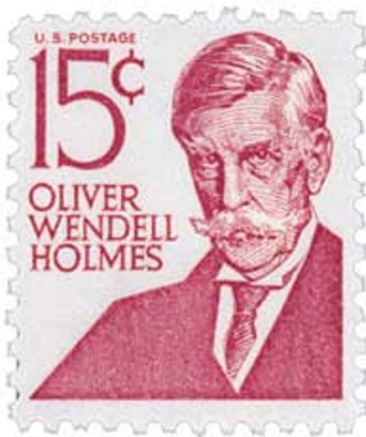


#### Stamp profile (1932):

- **Country:** Hungary
- **Issued on:** 1932-07-01
- **Size:** 21 x 26 mm
- **Colors:** Ultramarine
- **Watermark:** Patriarch's Cross Solitary Multiple
- **Designers:** Légrády Sándor
- **Printers:** State Printing Works (ANY Biztonsági Nyomda Nyrt), Budapest
- **Perforation:** comb15
- **Printing:** Photogravure
- **Face value:** 4 fi - Hungarian filler

#### **Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809 – 1894)**

Oliver Wendell Holmes was an American physician who published "The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever" in 1843, arguing that puerperal fever was transmitted from patient to patient through physicians. In 1846, he coined the term "anesthesia," initially referring to insensibility to touch. To commemorate his contributions, the United States Post Office issued a 15-cent stamp in 1968 as part of the "Prominent American" Series, designed by Richard Hurd and engraved by Albert Saavedra and Joseph S. Creamer Jr.



The stamp's design is based on a photograph of Holmes that appeared in the New York Times in 1951. Additionally, he was honored with six First Day Covers and a USPS Souvenir Page dedicated to his legacy.

#### Stamp profile:

- **Issue Date:** March 8, 1968
- **City:** Washington, DC
- **Printed By:** Bureau of Engraving and Printing
- **Printing Method:** Rotary Press
- **Color:** Magenta

#### **William Harvey (1578-1657)**

William Harvey was an English physician who first accurately demonstrated systemic circulation in his book "De Motu Cordis" published in 1628. He made significant observations regarding the placenta, fetal circulatory system, and fetal nourishment, including the discovery of the ductus arteriosus and its partial function explanation. In 1957, the USSR issued a 40-Kopeks stamp to commemorate the 300th anniversary of his death, highlighting his contributions with the text "An outstanding English doctor who discovered blood circulation." In 1959, Argentina's postal service honored him with a bluish-green stamp and two First Day Covers for the "21st International Congress of Physiological Sciences." On his 400th birth anniversary in 1978, the USSR released a multicolored stamp featuring Harvey with blue edges and two "Bowl of Hygieia" symbols. In 1982, the Republic of Transkei issued a stamp designed by John Meyer that included a portrait of Harvey alongside a hand showing its arterial anatomy. Finally, in 1987, Hungary released a stamp as part of a series featuring great pioneers in medicine, showcasing Harvey's portrait with a surreal human heart and arterial branches, designed by János Kass.



#### Stamp Profile:

- **USSR (1957):**
- **Release Date:** 1957-05-20
- **Size:** 30 x 42 mm
- **Color:** brown
- **Designers:** Yevgeni Gundobin
- **Perforation:** Grebenhawn12 x 12¼
- **Printing:** Photogravure
- **Nominal value:** 40 Russian penny





### Besim Ömer Akalın (1862 – 1940)

Besim Ömer Akalın, the founder of modern obstetrics and gynecology in Turkey, advocated for mandatory special education and formal training for nurses. He challenged the repressive mindset that prevented Muslim women from seeking medical care from male physicians. In 1911, Akalın voluntarily trained many women, several of whom later provided skilled medical care to wounded soldiers during World War I. He also paved the way for the first Turkish female physicians by enrolling them at the Imperial Medical College in 1922. To honor Akalın's contributions to modern medicine, Turkey issued a 5-Kurus stamp featuring his portrait in black and white against a blue background.



#### Stamp Profile:

- **Issued by:** Turkey
- **Date:** 1965
- **Denom:** 5 kuruş
- **Color:** blue & black
- **Design:** Besim Omer Akalın
- **Perf:** 13.5

### Maria Cuțarida-Crătunescu (1857—1919)

Maria Cuțarida-Crătunescu, the first female physician in Romania, established the country's first Maternal Society dedicated to safeguarding the welfare of children regardless of religion or ethnicity. She actively served during World War I. In 1884, Cuțarida-Crătunescu completed her doctoral thesis "Hydrorrhea and its semiological value in cancer of the corpus of the uterus" at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris, becoming the first woman in Eastern Europe to earn a medical doctorate. To honor her achievements, Romania issued an 80-Romanian Ban stamp in 2007. Designed by Octavian Penda, the stamp features a portrait of Cuțarida-Crătunescu along with a Red Cross symbol and the "Bowl of Hygieia." The Red Cross emblem was adopted at the Geneva Congress in 1864 to identify neutral medical services and protect them from military attacks during conflicts.

#### Stamp Profile:

- **Face value:** 80 Bani
- **Stamp colour:** Bicolor



guarding the welfare of children regardless of religion or ethnicity. She actively served during World War I. In 1884, Cuțarida-Crătunescu completed her doctoral thesis "Hydrorrhea and its semiological value in cancer of the corpus of the uterus" at

- **Issue date:** 23/02/2007
- **Designer:** Octavian Penda
- **Print technique:** Photogravure
- **Perforation:** 13.5 by 13.5

### Honorina Acosta-Sison (1888–1970)

Honorina Acosta-Sison, the first female physician in the Philippines, conducted extensive research in the areas of eclampsia, choriocarcinoma, and complications during childbirth. Throughout her successful career, she received numerous awards and medals for her contributions to medicine. In 1978, the Philippines issued a commemorative stamp valued at 30 Philippine centimos in her honor. This stamp features her name and portrait, along with symbols such as the caduceus and the "Rod of Asclepius," which represent healing and medicine.



#### Stamp profile:

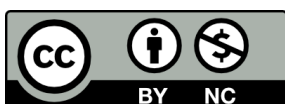
- **Face value:** 30 sentimo
- **Year:** 15/12/1978
- **Issue group:** 1978 Honorina Acosta-Sison
- **Designer/Engraver:** Printing office
- **Perforation:** Line perforation 12½
- **Watermark:** RP KK
- **Luminescence:** Phosphorescent
- **Printing technique:** Offset

### Lin Qiaozhi (1901 – 1983)



Lin Qiaozhi, a pioneering Chinese obstetrician and gynecologist, conducted research in the fields of placental abnormalities, fetal breathing, female pelvic diseases, gynecologic oncology and neonatal hemolytic disorders. Over the course of her career,

she personally delivered more than 50,000 babies. To honor her contributions, China Post issued a commemorative stamp from the "Scientists" series on the seventh anniversary of her passing.



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The stamp features Lin Qiaozhi's portrait alongside an image of a fetus in the womb, symbolizing her dedication to maternal and fetal health.

#### Sir James Simpson (1811 - 1870)



Sir James Simpson, a Scottish obstetrician, was the first to use chloroform as an anesthetic in humans and played a key role in its application during childbirth. He advocated for the inclusion of midwives in hospitals and developed a design for obstetric forceps, now known

as "Simpson Forceps," to assist with difficult deliveries. In 1992, Transkei issued a 65-cent stamp to honor Sir James Simpson. The stamp, designed by Johan Van Niekerk, depicts him alongside a midwife administering chloroform to a patient in the labor room.

#### Stamp profile:

- **Issued by:** Transkei
- **Date:** 4/1/1992
- **Denomination:** 65c
- **Color:** multicolored

#### Virginia Apgar (1909 – 1974)

Virginia Apgar was an American anesthesiologist who brought obstetrical considerations into the field of neonatology. In 1952, she created a scoring system for assessing the health of newborns immediately after birth, which helps determine the need for urgent intervention and resuscitation. This scoring system quickly gained global acceptance due to its strong correlation with neonatal mortality, as well as its effectiveness in identifying infants requiring immediate care. In recognition of her significant contributions, the United States Postal Service honored her with a 20-cent stamp in 1994.



#### Stamp profile:

- **Value:** 20¢
- **First Day of Issue:** October 24, 1994
- **First Day City:** Dallas, Texas
- **Printed by:** Banknote Corporation of America
- **Printing Method:** Engraved
- **Perforations:** 11.2 x 11.1
- **Color:** red brown

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