

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0904

Sandford-Morgan, Elma

(1890 - 1983)

Born 1 January, 1890, North Adelaide South Australia Australia

Died 31 December, 1983

Occupation Medical practitioner

Summary

Dr Elma Sandford-Morgan was brought up in a Baptist household. She attended Miss Martin's school before her family sailed to Europe. Here she went to Cheltenham's Ladies College for a year as a boarder. Returning to Adelaide in 1905, she studied piano at the Adelaide Conservatorium under Herr Reimann. Later she travelled with her family around Australia and in Queensland she met a doctor who suggested she do medicine. In 1910 she commenced medicine at Sydney University. Three years later she went with her family on a trip from China across the Siberian railway to Moscow. She graduated in 1917 and worked in Australia, London and at the Women's Mission Hospital at Bewanee in the Punjab. Then in 1920 she went to a hospital in Bagdad. Here she married Captain Harry Morgan and their daughter Rosemary was born in 1922. Son Gavin was born in 1925. Later the family settled in Sydney and she worked at the Rachel Forster Hospital. 1928 she was appointed Assistant to the Director of Maternal Welfare in the Public Health Department, and in 1929 was the first woman to become Director of Maternal Welfare in the Public Health Service. She was a district commissioner in the Girl Guides and a representative to the Australian Federation of University Women. Moving to South Australia, Sandford-Morgan became Health Officer with the Mothers and Babies Association and helped set up Torrens House, a mothercraft training centre. During World War II joined the RAAN as a medical officer, was working in general practice, and for two years organised the Health Services of South Australia as the only woman member of the Parliamentary Commission. After the war she visited Europe and on return obtained a locum tenens as neoplasm registrar to the Anti-Cancer Foundation. She was appointed by the University of Adelaide to the Radio Therapy Department where she worked for eleven years. Sandford-Morgan retired in 1964 and then worked at the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service until she was 80 years old. During 1966-1968 she attended the Medical Women's International Association conferences in Rochester and Vienna and became president of the Australian Medical Women's Association to work against bias according to sex and equal treatment of women doctors. Her main interest was preventative medicine and public health.

Published resources

Book

A short history of medical women in Australia, Morgan, Elma Sandford, 1970

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

State Library of South Australia

[Interview with Elma Sandford-Morgan \[sound recording\]](#) Interviewer: Aileen Bond

Author Details

Anne Heywood and Robin Secomb

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