



Elizabeth Bagshaw MD

Dr. Elizabeth Bagshaw's devotion to women's health is a treasured part of our nation's medical heritage. Pursuing a career in medicine at a time when women were not accepted in the field, Dr. Bagshaw entered Toronto Women's Medical College in 1901 just 18 years after it opened.

After a short period of practice in Toronto, Dr. Bagshaw went to Hamilton to substitute for a female doctor who was on vacation. Liking the city so much, she moved there and began her 70 year career as a family physician with a primary focus on obstetrics.

For three successive years in the 1920's Dr. Bagshaw signed more birth certificates than any other Hamilton doctor. In addition to her work in obstetrics, Dr. Bagshaw worked for ten years without pay in a dermatology clinic at the hospital. In 1976, at the age of 95 and still with a practice of 50 patients, Dr. Bagshaw decided it was time to retire. She was the oldest practicing physician in Canada.

In 1932, despite intense criticism from the medical and religious communities, Dr. Bagshaw became actively involved in Canada's first and illegal birth control clinic. She served as the clinic's medical director for over 30 years pioneering areas of family medicine that, while universal now, were not widely practiced. Believing it a detriment to the country to go on having more children than one could afford, she provided information and education, and championed the notion that women are in control of their reproductive destinies. In 1969, the clinic became legal and eventually received government grants.

Founder of the Canadian Federation of Medical Women, Dr. Elizabeth Bagshaw has received numerous awards and honours. In 1973, she was invested as a Member of the Order of Canada, and in 1979 she received the Governor General Persons Award. She was named Hamilton's Citizen of the Year in 1970 and the Hamilton Academy of Medicine established a guest lectureship in her name in 1981.