

Department of Medicine Inclusion Council Celebrates Black History Month Honoring Black Physicians



Audrey Forbes Manley, MD, MPH

Pediatrician

Public health, neonatology, researcher, and academic

The Department of Medicine Inclusion Council honors and celebrates the accomplishments of Audrey Forbes Manley, MD, MPH, (born March 25, 1934). Dr. Manley may be best known as the first African American woman appointed as chief resident at Cook County Children's Hospital in Chicago in 1962. Manley was the first African American woman to achieve the rank of Assistant Surgeon General (Rear Admiral) in 1988 and later served as the eighth president of Spelman College.



From humble beginnings in rural Mississippi, Audrey Forbes Manley, MD, MPH, grew up in the segregated South right after the depression and by the age of nine, worked picking cotton. During World War II, her family moved to Chicago where she graduated from Wendell Phillips High School and received a voice scholarship to attend Spelman College in Atlanta. She used this opportunity to expand her interests and majored in biology and minored in chemistry and math.

She graduated from Meharry Medical College in 1959 and went on to complete her residency at Chicago's Cook County Children's Hospital, where at 27 she became the first woman, second African American, and the youngest person to be appointed chief resident at the pediatric division. She then took a series of jobs in pediatric medicine, working at the North Lawndale Neighborhood Health Center and serving two years as the assistant medical director at the Woodlawn Child Health Center; then relocated to San Francisco where she practiced pediatric medicine at Mt. Zion Medical Center. Dr. Manley took up a position as Chief of Medical Services at Grady Memorial Hospital's Emory University Family Planning Clinic in Atlanta, Georgia. She also held faculty appointments at the University of Illinois, the University of Chicago, and the University of California. Dr. Manley later earned a master's degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University.



Acting Surgeon General Dr. Manley gives advice columnist Ann Landers a flu shot.

In 1976, she became a captain in the U.S. Public Health Service. Over the next ten years she studied sickle cell disease and other genetic illnesses. She was the first African American woman appointed principal deputy assistant secretary for health in the U.S. Public Health Service in 1987 and was the first African American woman to achieve the rank of Assistant Surgeon General (Rear Admiral) in 1988. She served as deputy U.S. surgeon general in 1994 and acting U.S. surgeon general from 1995 to 1997.

Trained in neonatology, she is one of the nation's leading physicians, clinicians, medical academicians and public health professionals.

Dr. Audrey Forbes Manley became the first alumna to lead her beloved alma mater when she was appointed Spelman College's eighth president in 1997, following in her late husband's footsteps, Dr. Albert Manley, who as the fifth president of Spelman was the first Black and male president of the college. Serving 5 years as Spelman's president, Dr. Manley retired in 2002. She is especially proud of the school's success in encouraging young women students to train for careers in the sciences.

She remains involved in numerous organizations, including the American Academy of family Physicians and is a member of the prestigious Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. She is widely published in medical literature.

Dr. Manley cites University of Illinois professor Dr. Ira Rosenthal, who was also an attending at Cook County during her time there, as one of her mentors.