

#SundayWiMIN23 Week 27: Dr Nina Carson (1923-2007), Consultant Paediatrician at Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children (retired 1983). Pioneer of homocystinuria diagnosis and management, promoter of neonatal screening. Honorary Member of the Society for the Study of Inborn Errors of Metabolism #SSIEM  
Please help us find a photo of Dr Carson!

“Dr Nina Agnes Jane Carson was a consultant paediatrician at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. She was born in Belfast. Her parents were Simon Armour Carson, a cattle exporter and butcher, and Elizabeth Carson née Allen. She attended Belfast Royal Academy and Queen’s University, Belfast, qualifying in 1946.

She held house posts in Londonderry and then, from 1948 to 1959, was an assistant clinical pathologist at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. She was subsequently a clinical research fellow in the department of child health, Queen’s University. From 1976, she was a senior lecturer at Queen’s and a consultant in paediatrics at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. She retired in 1983.

In 1963, she gained an MD for research which looked at urine samples from over 2,000 children and adults with mental disability, searching for metabolic abnormalities. She identified a high prevalence of undiagnosed phenylketonuria (PKU), and also described the clinical and urinary amino acid chromatograph abnormalities in two siblings with an unknown disease. With Charles Dent, she described the biochemistry of this new disease – homocystinuria (‘Homocystinuria: a new inborn error of metabolism associated with mental deficiency’ Arch Dis Child. 1963 Oct;38[201]:425-36). Over the next 20 years she contributed to the understanding of homocystinuria and its treatment.

She also took a leading role in promoting routine neonatal screening to identify children with metabolic disorders. Urine screening for PKU started in Northern Ireland in 1960. She later adapted the ferric chloride test developed by the discoverer of PKU, Ivar Asbjørn Følling, improving its reliability. The consequent increase in numbers of patients led to the establishment of a clinic for inborn errors of metabolism in 1965, which became the third largest in the UK. In the late 1960s she played a key role in introducing newborn heel prick (Guthrie) screening to Northern Ireland. In 1980, she assisted with the development of routine screening for congenital hypothyroidism.

She was a member of the Medical Research Council’s steering committee for PKU and an honorary member of the Society for the Study of Inborn Errors of Metabolism.

Outside medicine, she was a national Irish backstroke champion for many years and was one of the first women to be elected into the Irish Swimming Hall of Fame. With her husband, William James Adams Lowry (‘Jim’), who she married in 1947, she won a large number of Irish, UK and European sailing championships (in the Scorpion dinghy class). At 60 she took up skiing and golf, and tried parascending at 70. She and her husband had a son and a daughter, eight grandchildren and two great grandchildren.”

Taken from Royal College of Physicians website - <https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/.../nina-agnes-jane-carson>

(Like many unsung female phenomena, the amount of publicly available information about Dr Carson is small, and there is no photo attached to her biography. If anyone has a photograph of Dr Carson, please send it to us at [hello@wimin.ie](mailto:hello@wimin.ie) so that we can complete her profile.)