

Dr. Mariella Fischer Williams
Nominated by Jill Meilahn

Headlines in the Marshfield News Herald announced the arrival of Dr. Mariella Fischer Williams in March 1968 as the first woman physician at the Marshfield Clinic. Two women physicians had previously worked at the clinic for short periods. Dr. Elizabeth Baldwin worked in Anesthesiology beginning in 1934 and Dr. Angie Connor in Obstetrics and Pediatrics 1942-43. These contracts were during the WWII era and the women filled in for male physicians serving in the armed forces, leaving once the men returned.



1968 was late in the game for hiring women physicians. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman credentialed in the United States in 1849. Dr. Laura Ross Wolcott was the first woman physician in Wisconsin, opening a practice in Milwaukee in 1857 and admitted (finally) to the WI Medical Society in 1869.

100 years later Dr. Williams, a neurologist, moved to Marshfield from London, hoping to practice high quality medicine and continue her research in a “peaceful atmosphere”. She completed medical school in England in 1947. She was active in clinical practice and research on seizures and polio. She spent time in America serving as associate professor of neurology at Wayne State University in Detroit and consultant and research associate at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN from 1961-65.

Dr. Williams served at Marshfield Clinic until 1974 when she married and moved to Milwaukee. She met her husband, Patrick Werner, through hiking. They spent many walking holidays in North American wildernesses, where they camped well into their 70s.

Dr. Williams authored several textbooks, over 70 medical papers and the book ‘Emotions of a Physician’ published in 1993.

She died in 2017 at age 96, described in her obituary as “a neurologist, accomplished musician, author, and guardian of the family history.”