

Amy Hunter-Wilson, MD Scholarship Fund



Amy Hunter-Wilson, MD

Doctor Amy Hunter-Wilson graduated from the Yale Medical School of Public Health in 1930. She was one of five women in a class of about 60 and noted, "They didn't really like us (the women) there, but I always felt if you want to do something, you should do it." She set high goals for herself throughout her career and she accomplished much.

Born in New York City in 1898, the young girl of Quaker heritage became an impressive scholar, attending Vassar College for Women and then Cornell University for her Master of Science degree in nutrition. She earned her medical degree from Yale Medical School of Public Health at a time when public health was not considered a favorable field for women.

Doctor Hunter-Wilson's farsighted research in the 1930s included studying the effect of smoking on fetuses. She concluded that smoking doubled the heart rate of the mother and had a negative effect on the health of the unborn child. Her conclusions were not readily accepted. In fact, the adverse effects of smoking on unborn children were not recognized for another 40 years.

As Wisconsin's State Director of Maternal and Child Health from 1935 to 1961, Dr. Hunter-Wilson did much for the health of the people of Wisconsin with significant accomplishments in the area of maternal and child health. Under her guidance, maternal death rates were reduced



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from 3.9 per 1,000 live births to 0.3. She was largely instrumental in initiating the essential nutrition program of the State Board of Health.

During her tenure as a Wisconsin Medical Society member, Dr. Hunter-Wilson spearheaded Society activities dealing with premature and neonatal deaths. She is credited with the provision of wooden incubators for use with premature infants in home deliveries and smaller hospitals before modern incubators were developed. Her efforts were based on her visits to Native American reservations and areas of rural Wisconsin.

Dr. Hunter-Wilson died on July 7, 1990. Through a bequest to the Foundation, she established a significant fund for the training or advanced education of Native Americans as doctors of medicine, nurses or technicians in related health fields.