

4th Historic teaser: Under the glass ceiling (1959-1968)

The fifth decade of MWIA's history began with the official emblem being approved in 1960.

The MWIA presidents of that decade were Janet AITKEN, U.K. (1958-1962), Fe del MUNDO, Philippines (1962-1966), Lore ANTOINE, Austria (1966-1968) and Lorna LLOYD-GREEN, Australia (1968-1970).



The 1960s were an exciting as well as a challenging time for medical women. Even though medical schools had started to admit female medical students in the 1940s, the number remained low. In 1960, the percentage of female medical students for example in the US was still 5.8% and medical institutes still had a preference for male students. In 1961, the percentage of practicing physicians in the US was a mere 5.7%. The situation was quite similar in many countries all over the world.

A breath of fresh air came in 1964, when a female physician, **Dr. Taussig** was awarded the **Medal of Freedom** for her work on cyanotic heart diseases in children and in 1965 became the first woman president of the American Heart Association. Still the numbers of female medical students grew slowly in the UK and many other countries and e.g. in 1968, female medical students accounted for 20 - 25% of all medical students in the UK.

Membership Development

Affiliation of new National Associations: 1962: Brazil, Columbia, 1964: Madagascar, Spain, Guatemala. At the end of that decade **MWIA had 34 National Associations** in total. However Cuba, Greece, Turkey and Portugal discontinued with their membership.

MWIA meetings

In 1963, the 9th International MWIA congress was held at the Manila Philippines Auditorium named after Dr Esther Lovejoy at the Congress. This was also **the first International MWIA congress in Far East**. The picture to the left is from the 9th MWIA international congress at Philam Auditorium, Manila, December 30th, 1963. Pictured are Doctors Ora, Arellano, Lovejoy, [Aisken?] and Reid¹

An extraordinary general meeting was held in Norway with 585 participants from 26 countries. The picture to the right shows the departure of MWIA members for the extraordinary meeting in Norway. 1964².



¹ Courtesy of OHSU Historical Collections & Archives

² Courtesy to Legacy Center Archives, Drexel University College of Medicine

Further International MWIA congresses were 1966 in Rochester, N.Y., U.S.A and 1968 in Vienna, Austria

Change is not easy to bring about. The decade of 1960s comes across as a time when although females were allowed to pursue a medical degree and practice medicine afterwards, it was still a challenge of astronomical proportions. Interpreting how, where, when, how much and why the number of female medical students and female doctors grew is not easy or straight forward. What is clear is that it has been a struggle that continues even today. **Join us next month to unfold another decade of the struggles of female medical doctors.**

Sources

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Photo: Medical Women's Federation. *MWIA*. <http://www.medicalwomensfederation.org.uk/about-us/medical-women-s-international-association>