



Dr. M. Joycelyn Elders

15th U.S. Surgeon General

Dr. M. Joycelyn Elders is a pediatrician and public health administrator. Long an outspoken advocate of public health, Dr. Elders was appointed the 15th Surgeon General of the United States by President Clinton in 1993. A vice admiral in the Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, she was the second woman, second person of color, and first African American to serve as Surgeon General. She earned a four-year scholarship to attend Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas where she received her B.S. degree in biology. Graduating in only three years, she joined the U.S. Army and trained in physical therapy in Houston, Texas. In 1956, she enrolled in the University of Arkansas Medical School on the GI Bill. Four years later, she was the only woman to graduate from the school, earning her medical degree.

Dr. Elders completed her training and earned a master's degree in biochemistry from the University of Arkansas in 1967. After she earned her M.D. degree, Dr. Elders began a pediatric internship at the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, Minnesota. She became the chief resident at the University of Arkansas Medical School in 1963. Dr. Elders was hired as an assistant professor at the University of Arkansas in 1971 and was promoted to the position of professor in 1976. In 1978, Dr. Elders earned her certification as a pediatric endocrinologist.

In 1987, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton appointed Dr. Elders as director of the Arkansas Department of Health. She then became the 15th Surgeon General of the United States under President Clinton in 1993. As Surgeon General, Dr. Elders focused on women's reproductive health care and promoted sex, alcohol, drug, and tobacco education in public schools. She resigned from that position in 1994 and returned to the University of Arkansas, where she worked as a professor of pediatric

endocrinology. Dr. Elders wrote her autobiography (with David Chanoff) in 1996, entitled *Joycelyn Elders, M.D.: From Sharecropper's Daughter to Surgeon General of the United States of America*. In 2002, Dr. Elders retired from the University of Arkansas Medical Center.

In 2014, Dr. Elders teamed up with the Institute for Sexual and Gender Health (then the Program in Human Sexuality) at the University of Minnesota Medical School to advance comprehensive science-based sexual health education by creating the Joycelyn Elders Chair in Sexual Health Education with the goal of changing the direction of sexual health in the US and around the world.

By establishing the Elders Chair, the Institute is working to create comprehensive life-long sexual education curricula, to increase the number of health care providers trained in sexual health care, and to expand scientific research in sexuality education. The Institute has established a fully online Master of Professional Studies in Sexual Health at the University of Minnesota, open to qualified graduates from any country.

In 2016, the Jocelyn Elders Clinic was established in Kisinga, Uganda. The clinic served students at Garama Humanist Secondary School and promoted sex education and treated students that suffered from diseases such as malaria. Now retired from practice, she is a professor emeritus at the University of Arkansas School of Medicine and remains active in public health education.