Today academic surgeons pave the way for a new generation of physicians and surgeons.
Pioneers

African Americans have always practiced medicine, whether as physicians, healers, midwives or “root doctors.”

Early black pioneer physicians like Charles R. Drew (right) and Daniel H. Williams not only became skilled practitioners, they became trailblazers and educators, paving the way for future physicians, surgeons, and nurses, and opening doors to better health care for the African American community.

Contemporary Pioneers

Academic surgeons not only exemplify excellence in their surgical fields, they believe in continuing the tradition of excellence through the education and mentoring of young physicians and surgeons.

Alexa I. Canady, M.D. is the first African American woman neurosurgeon and a retired professor of surgery at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI.

Claude H. Organ, Jr., M.D. was a general surgeon and the first African American chair of a department of surgery at a predominantly white medical school in Omaha, Nebraska.

Rosalyn P. Scott, M.D., is the first African American woman cardiothoracic surgeon. She is professor of surgery at Wright State University Boonshoft School of Medicine and Chief, Surgical Service at the Dayton Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Dayton, Ohio.

New Frontiers

In the first half of the 20th century, Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C. and Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee were two of the few places available to African American academic surgeons. Today African Americans hold some of the most prestigious academic positions in the United States.

Dr. Sharon M. Henry is a trauma surgeon, professor of surgery, and chief of the division of wound healing and metabolism at the R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore.

Dr. Henry became the first African American woman member of the American Association for the Surgery of Trauma when she was elected a member in 2000.

Dr. Levi Watkins was professor of cardiac surgery and associate dean of The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He was the first African American to hold these positions at Johns Hopkins.

In 1980, Dr. Watkins performed the first human implantation of the automatic defibrillator at Johns Hopkins Hospital.