

**LEILA  
EDNA  
ANDREWS**  
**1876-1954**



**DOCTOR  
SPECIALIZING  
IN BLOOD  
DISEASES**

Dr. Leila Andrews was one of Oklahoma's leading physicians, being one of the first women elected to the American College of Physicians and helped direct the 1918 Oklahoma City Spanish flu pandemic.

Leila Edna Andrews was born in August 1876 in North Manchester, Indiana. She received her M. D. degree from Northwestern University in 1900 and practiced medicine in North Manchester from 1900 to 1907. She moved to the new state of Oklahoma in 1908, where she settled in Oklahoma City.

In 1910 Dr. Andrews was hired by the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine as a pediatrics instructor. She became an associate professor of medicine from 1915 to 1925. Dr. Andrews worked at St. Anthony's, Wesley and University Hospitals, specializing in the treatment of blood diseases. She also had a general practice in which she treated mostly women and children.

The American College of Physicians (ACP) announced that professor Leila Andrews of the University of Oklahoma and Anna Weld of Rockford, Illinois were part of a group of two hundred physicians named "Fellows of the ACP" at their fourth annual meeting in February 1920. They were the first two women to become ACP members. Andrews was accepted into this organization in recognition of her work treating blood diseases.

At the start of October 1918, Oklahoma City was in the midst of their Spanish flu epidemic. Most doctors reported that they were seeing fewer and fewer cases each day. The County Board of Health believed that the drop off in cases was proof the worst was over. Dr. Andrews dissented saying that the people who know how bad the situation is are too busy working to protest.

In the end the Board ruled that citizens were unduly alarmed because of newspaper reports of the national pandemic and what was seen in the city were just strong colds, not Spanish influenza. They not only ruled that a quarantine was unnecessary, but likewise opposed the closing the schools since the schoolchildren were not getting ill.

On Monday morning of the following week, Mayor Ed Overholser was ill. By the end of the day, only one commissioner – finance chief Mike Donnelly – was able to come to work. With city government decapitated, hospitals filled to capacity, doctors and nurses working 48-hour shifts, communication and transportation on life support due to absences and the working life in the city in shambles, it was shaping up to be one of the most tragic periods in Oklahoma City's history. Dr. Andrews had been right all along.

Andrews impacted her community in many ways. During her time at Northwestern, she became a member of Alpha Epsilon Iota, a chapter of the national women's medical organization that began there in 1898. She later started a chapter in Oklahoma and served as the organization's national president from 1923 to 1925. During World War I, Andrews served as the state chairman of the Women's Library Loan committee, which raised four million dollars in just two weeks for the war effort. She was also involved with Daughters of the American Revolution, being a descendant of John Andrews, who enlisted in the Three Connecticut Regiment in 1777.

She was active in the Oklahoma County, Oklahoma State, and American Medical Societies and Associations and the American Board of Internal Medicine. In 1938, she was one of ten Oklahoma women to be honored by the national Federation of Business and Professional Women. She practiced medicine in Oklahoma City until her retirement in 1950. Dr. Andrews died in April 1954 at age 77 in Oklahoma City.