

# Generations of STEM: Dr. Patricia Bath

## Cataract Treatment Innovator

Patricia Bath was always interested in medicine. She got her medical degree from Howard University and went on to become the first African American resident doctor in ophthalmology at Columbia University. An ophthalmologist, Patricia invented the Laserphaco Probe, a new device for cataract surgery.



Her research showed that the high prevalence of blindness among blacks was due to a lack of ophthalmic care. She developed “community ophthalmology” combining public health and clinical services to assist the underserved populations. This work is used today in many communities.

Joining the faculty of UCLA and the Charles R. Drew University in 1974, she quickly became the first woman faculty member in the Dept of Ophthalmology and was offered a basement office near the lab animals. She refused. By 1983, she was the first woman in the US to hold a chair position of an ophthalmology residency training program.

In 1981 she conceived the idea of the Laserphaco Probe to remove cataracts. Used worldwide, the device has recovered the eyesight of many blind patients.

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