Dr Kathleen Winning

The honorary degree of Doctor of Medicine was bestowed posthumously upon the late Dr Kathleen Winning at a conferring of degrees ceremony on Wednesday, 14 June 1989 and accepted on her behalf by her grand-niece, Leith Toll.

Report

Speaking about Dr Winning's long-term interest in premature and sick babies, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor John Ward, said she was one of the outstanding forerunners in the science of neonatology.

After entering the medical school at the University of Sydney in 1921 she went on to do her junior residency at Sydney Hospital.

The beginning of her very remarkable career in Paediatrics began with her appointment as Resident Medical Officer at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children in 1929.

By 1947, though, there were still only four full-time practicing paediatricians in NSW. Dr Winning was one of them.

Professor Ward went on to say that Dr Winning adhered strongly to the belief that premature babies should be disturbed as little as possible, that breast-feeding of them should be encouraged and that oxygen should be administered with great care because of its potential to do harm as well as good.

It was her procedure of surrounding her 'children' with cotton wool and placing them in cots insulated by brown paper, said Professor Ward, that gave rise to the tag 'Cotton wool Kids' being applied to her premature charges.

Professor Ward was also quick to point out that while Dr Winning's central focus was always her sick infants, she never forgot the tired or distressed mother who needed comfort and understanding.

The production of educational films for parents, teachers and nurses was also one of Kathleen Winning's priorities. 'Care of the Premature Baby' and 'The Natural Feeding of Infants' both won medical awards at the Cannes and New York film festivals.

Dr Winning died in November 1988.

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