

Process Paper

When I heard about the theme of frontiers, I thought about early women physicians who pushed frontiers in the medical field by introducing innovative ideas while enduring gender disparities. This led me to research online about women physicians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries since more women began to take on prominent roles in the medical field during this time period. I eventually found a website for the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, which piqued my interest because it was a medical college dedicated specifically to women at a time where the majority of doctors were men. This website detailed the accomplishments of multiple graduates including Catharine Macfarlane, who was the first student to research the prevention of cervical cancer. After some online research, I found that Macfarlane established the first cervical cancer screening clinic in Philadelphia where she provided pelvic examinations to asymptomatic women. I was immediately intrigued to learn more about Macfarlane because I envision myself being a physician when I am older, and I would love to emulate the achievements of female pioneers in the medical field like Macfarlane.

I continued conducting my research by searching extensively online through databases, websites, digital newspapers, and academic journals. The best secondary source that I found was a journal article titled "The Gender of Cancer" because it immersed me in the time period in which Macfarlane established her cancer screening clinic and explained the cancer detection campaigns that influenced her ideas. I also examined several essential primary sources that were written by Macfarlane herself, and they provided me with first-hand descriptions of her clinical experiments including details about the volunteers, procedures, and results. Furthermore, I explored websites about modern cervical cancer screening methods to analyze the long-term impact that Macfarlane's research and experimentation had on gynecological practices.

Since I am very creative and skilled with technology, I decided to design a website for my project. I really enjoyed choosing the color scheme, fonts, and overall layout of the website in order to add visual aspects to my presentation. The purple color scheme is emblematic of Macfarlane's charismatic and bold personality, as she advocated for her ideas of periodic pelvic examinations despite negative feedback from her colleagues. My information is organized in chronological order and split up into different sections based on relevancy, and I attached pictures and quotes next to various sections in order to provide further explanations and illustrations.

Catharine Macfarlane perfectly exemplifies this year's theme because she expanded the frontier of cervical cancer research and control through her experimentation with periodic pelvic examinations of asymptomatic women. Macfarlane's cervical cancer screening clinic saved the lives of many women volunteers as they were able to receive a cancer diagnosis at an early enough stage to be cured; additionally, Macfarlane and her associates prevented many volunteers from developing cervical cancer by treating their unhealthy uterine conditions. Essentially, Macfarlane left a lasting legacy on cancer screening practices and served as inspiration for cancer detection clinics to open across the U.S.