Gertrude Elion

1918 – 1999

What did she discover?

Despite facing gender discrimination, Gertrude was determined to pursue a career as a research scientist. Many labs refused to give her a job just because she was a woman.

She didn't let that stop her though - Gertrude went on to develop treatments for leukaemia, malaria, gout, herpes and AIDs.

Her method involved preventing substances called purines from entering the metabolic pathway, which blocked DNA production and prevented cell growth.

Today, the use of the leukaemia drug Gertude developed, 6-mercaptopurine, when combined with other drugs, is responsible for curing 80% of children with leukaemia.

Along with her colleagues, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1988 for discovering important principles of drug treatment.

Something to think about...

Why are viruses and cancers much harder to treat than bacterial infections?

PEUK A1457

Version 1.0 | UKS | Jan 2020 | DCL1: Public