
Female Pioneers in Healthcare

Reading Comprehension

Dr. Antonia Novello

In 1990, Dr. Antonia Novello became the first woman to become the Surgeon General of the United States. The Surgeon General is the main doctor in the United States. They are responsible for doing research and telling the public what they find. Novello taught people about the dangers of smoking and drinking alcohol. She told companies that make beer, wine, and cigarettes to stop trying to get teenagers to buy their products. She also taught people how to keep from getting AIDS.

Novello was born in Puerto Rico, and she earned a medical degree there in 1970. She always wanted to become a doctor, but she didn't know that she would be the most important doctor in the United States one day.

As a child, Novello had a health problem that caused her a lot of pain. She did not get the operation that was needed until she was 18. Although she was in pain, she often made jokes so the other kids wouldn't feel sad for her. She made friends with everyone and laughed a lot. She also worked hard to get good grades. She always did her best!

Novello was shocked when she was asked to be Surgeon General. She wasn't looking for a new job, but when President George Bush spoke to her himself, she took it. She kept the position for three years. Dr. Antonia Novello paved the way for other women in important healthcare positions. Just four years after Novello became the first female Surgeon General in the United States, Dr. Wendy Clay became the first female Surgeon General of Canada.

Story Questions:

1. Dr. Antonia Novello was born and raised in...
 - a. Latin America.
 - b. South America.
 - c. Puerto Rico.
 - d. Mexico.
2. You can infer from the passage that Dr. Novello became interested in becoming a doctor because...
 - a. she was sick as a child and knew that she wanted to help others get better.
 - b. the President told her that she would be a good doctor.
 - c. her mother told her that she would be a good doctor.
 - d. she wanted to be the United States Surgeon General.

3. How did Dr. Novello react when she was asked to be Surgeon General?
 - a. She expected it.
 - b. She was afraid.
 - c. She was shocked.
 - d. She was sad.

4. Dr. Wendy Clay became Canada's first female Surgeon General in...
 - a. 1991.
 - b. 1992.
 - c. 1993.
 - d. 1994.

Letter Writing

5. **Write** a letter to Canada's current Surgeon General sharing what research you think they should be completing right now to help keep kids healthy like Dr. Antonia Novello did.

Math Worksheet

6. Practise [multiplying with money](#).

Word Problems

7. **Read** the word problems below and **write** the answers.
 - ★ During a fundraiser as a child, Dr. Antonia Novello sold 40 magazine subscriptions at \$29.95 each. How much money did she collect?

 - ★ As a child, Dr. Wendy Clay sold 16 magazine subscriptions at \$9.50 each and 12 subscriptions at \$15.85 each. How much money did she collect in all?

Fun Stuff!

8. One of Dr. Antonia Novello's most visible and effective campaigns was against the tobacco industry's advertising aimed at children. This was especially evident in posters and billboard advertisements that featured the cartoon character, Joe Camel. **Create** an anti-smoking poster that Dr. Antonia might have used in her war against tobacco companies.