Dr. Walker was health pioneer

By Eva Botkin-Kowacki
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When Dr. Matthew Walker Sr. died, Meharry Medical College leaders remarked that in his lifetime he had trained more black surgeons than anyone in the world.

Walker chaired the college’s department of surgery from 1945 to 1973, was provost for external affairs 1973-78 and was president of the National Medical Association. He was a professor of surgery and gynecology at Meharry from 1944 until his death. In 1958, students honored him by creating the Matthew Walker Surgical Society.

He spearheaded community health care centers for the poor in the Mississippi River basin, including the Matthew Walker Health Center in Nashville. President Richard Nixon applauded this in a letter in 1970.

Walker was the first vice president of Metro Board of Hospitals. He was one of the first black men to become a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and was a diplomat on the American Board of Surgeons and the National Board of Medical Examiners.

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