

The NHD Process Paper

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We discovered Dr. James Barry while looking for a topic in the medical field. We wanted to do something involving medicine because we both have an interest in medical topics and professions. A friend recommended we look into Caesarean sections, which we thought was a very interesting and impactful topic in history. However, the first successful C-section was performed so early in history that there were not enough primary sources or images to use. As a result, we decided to narrow down our search. We started researching the first successful C-section performed by a woman and came up with two people.

As we looked into this, we found interesting results: Dr. James Barry is technically the first biological woman known to perform a successful C-section, but in modern times is often referred to as a transgender man. We chose to focus on Dr. Barry's C-section because it was a remarkable and important point in medical history that proved to have more information and more stories and facts to research. Dr. Barry is important because he performed the first successful C-section in the British Empire and challenged gender norms as a biological woman working as a surgeon. Our project argues that Dr. Barry changed history by improving hospital sanitation and proving that a biological woman could be an outstanding surgeon, even when society said it was impossible.

We found most of our research by looking through online databases and national archives. Since Dr. James Barry was in the British military, we used websites like The National Archives to find old records and primary sources, such as quotes and transcribed letters. We ended up finding and annotating about 70 sources for our bibliography. Moreover, it took a long time to sort through what was true and false because a lot of the speculation about Dr. Barry is based on personal opinion. In the end, having so many sources helped us understand the full story of Dr. Barry's life and career. Some of our most useful sources are from a biography titled *Dr. James Barry: A Woman Ahead of Her Time* and old medical reports from the 1820s. The biography was helpful because it gave us many details about Dr. Barry's personal secrets and medical

training. Another important source was The National Archives website, which had links to other transcribed primary sources. These resources changed how we thought about the topic because they provided us with a deeper insight into Dr. Barry's life and work.

Dr. James Barry sparked a medical revolution by successfully performing a C-section in 1826, a feat of surgical precision that was practically unheard of at the time. Dr. Barry's entire career challenged gender norms, improved hospital cleanliness, and helped reduce mortality rates, proving that gender does not dictate medical competence and surgical skill. By defying expectations, Dr. Barry set a high standard for both medical excellence and social progress for future generations.