

Elizabeth Kenny Biography

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Biography

Also known as Sister Kenny, Elizabeth Kenny was born 1886 in Warialda, New South Wales. Without formal nursing training, she worked initially as a bush country nurse, treating the first stages of polio and in 1933, established a clinic at Townsville, Queensland. She became best known for her treatment of poliomyelitis. In the acute phase of the disease, the patient's back and limbs are wrapped in woolen clothes, wrung out after soaking in hot water. After the painful phase has passed, the paralyzed muscles are slowly stimulated and reeducated with passive exercise. In the early 1940s, Kenny lectured in the United States and often found opposition from those accustomed to the old methods of immobilization of patients using splints and casts. She soon gained the support of the American Medical Association. In 1943, the Elizabeth Kenny Institute of Minneapolis, Minnesota was set up to train nurses and physical therapy staff in Kenny's treatment methods.