

## IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE WILLIAM KOSMAK  
1873-1954

**D**R. GEORGE WILLIAM KOSMAK died in New York City on July 10, 1954, two weeks before his eighty-first birthday and a few days after he had received and perused the July number of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* which took the form of a Festschrift in his honor.

Born and educated in New York City, he graduated from Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1899. After serving an internship in the Sloane Hospital for Women, he determined to make obstetrics and gynecology his specialty and became attached to the staff of the New York Lying-In Hospital. There he served first as assistant and later as attending obstetrician from 1905 to 1926. Thereafter he undertook the Medical Directorship of the Booth Memorial Hospital to which he gave devoted service. Up until a few years before his death he was actively engaged in private practice.

His interests and activities, however, ranged over a much wider field than that of obstetrics and gynecology. He early became interested in the organizational side of medicine and at various times held office in the American Medical Association at local, state, and national levels. He was a past president of the Medical Society of the County of New York, a past treasurer of the State Society, and for eight years prior to 1952 editor of the *New York State Journal of Medicine*. He was a member of the House of Delegates of the Association in 1918-1919 and again from 1934 to 1953. In all of these offices he was unsparing of his time and energy and brought to them sound judgment and direction.

For many years he was a member of the Public Relations Committee of the New York Academy of Medicine and as early as 1917 began urging that it undertake a study of maternal mortality. It took persistent effort on his part to persuade his fellow members to act, but they finally did so in 1928, when a subcommittee was appointed to make a survey. Dr. Kosmak was a most active member, did much of the preliminary planning, and never missed a meeting during the three-year period of investigation. He contributed largely to the final report published in 1933. Its publication had far-reaching results in that it stimulated similar surveys in other parts of the country, which in the aggregate have constituted a major contribution to the progressive lowering of maternal mortality rates in the succeeding years.

Dr. Kosmak was an associate editor of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children* from 1912 to 1917, when he became editor and remained as such until it ceased publication in 1919. His outstanding

achievement was the founding of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* in 1920 and his editorship of it from then until within two years of his death, when he became Editor Emeritus. Under his direction and guidance the "Gray Journal," as he loved to call it, developed from a national into an international medium for the dissemination of obstetrical and gynecological knowledge. In the careful selection and editing of its articles, in the discriminating choice of its advertising matter, and in its general format he made of it a model of what a first-class medical journal should be.

He had friends and correspondents in many lands. He frequently visited abroad and became one of our best, though unofficial, ambassadors to other countries and peoples. He constituted himself a committee of one to welcome foreign confreres to our shores and to direct them in their quest for firsthand information on clinics and schools in the United States and Canada. He was honored by many foreign societies including the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Great Britain, which conferred upon him its Honorary Fellowship.

Elected to active Fellowship of the American Gynecological Society in 1918, to Life Fellowship in 1943, he served as Treasurer 1931-1935, as Vice President 1936-1937, and as President 1943-1944. He brought to these offices the same organizational gifts which he had displayed elsewhere, and at the same time held ever before us high ideals of professional competence, accurate reporting, and ethical standards. His dynamic and kindly presence will be sorely missed at our future meetings.

*B. P. Watson*

**GEORGE W. KOSMAK****1873-1954**


---

By WALTER T. DANNREUTHER, NEW YORK, N. Y.

**D**R. GEORGE W. KOSMAK died at his home in New York City on July 10, 1954, exactly fourteen days before his eighty-first birthday and only a few days after the publication of the July issue of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, which had been in preparation for more than a year as a Festschrift in his honor. The tributes paid him in this volume by his confreres all over the world are mute testimony to the universal esteem in which he was held.

Dr. Kosmak graduated from Columbia University in 1894, and from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1899. After serving internships in the Memorial Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital for Children, and the Sloane Hospital for Women, he entered private practice in 1902, to begin a long and distinguished career. While he was primarily a specialist in obstetrics, he devoted a great deal of his effort to organized medicine, maternal and infant mortality, birth control, the training and licensure of midwives, and medical education. In fact, his professional interests were so widespread, the results of his activities so remarkable, and the honors bestowed upon him so numerous that it is impossible to do justice to all his achievements in a short memorial.

Dr. Kosmak served as attending surgeon at the New York Lying-In Hospital from 1904 to 1926, at the time when that institution was the Mecca for all who aspired to be obstetricians and had the largest outdoor service for postgraduate training in obstetrics in the world. He also became Director of Obstetrics at the Booth Memorial Hospital and consulting obstetrician to several hospitals in the New York area.

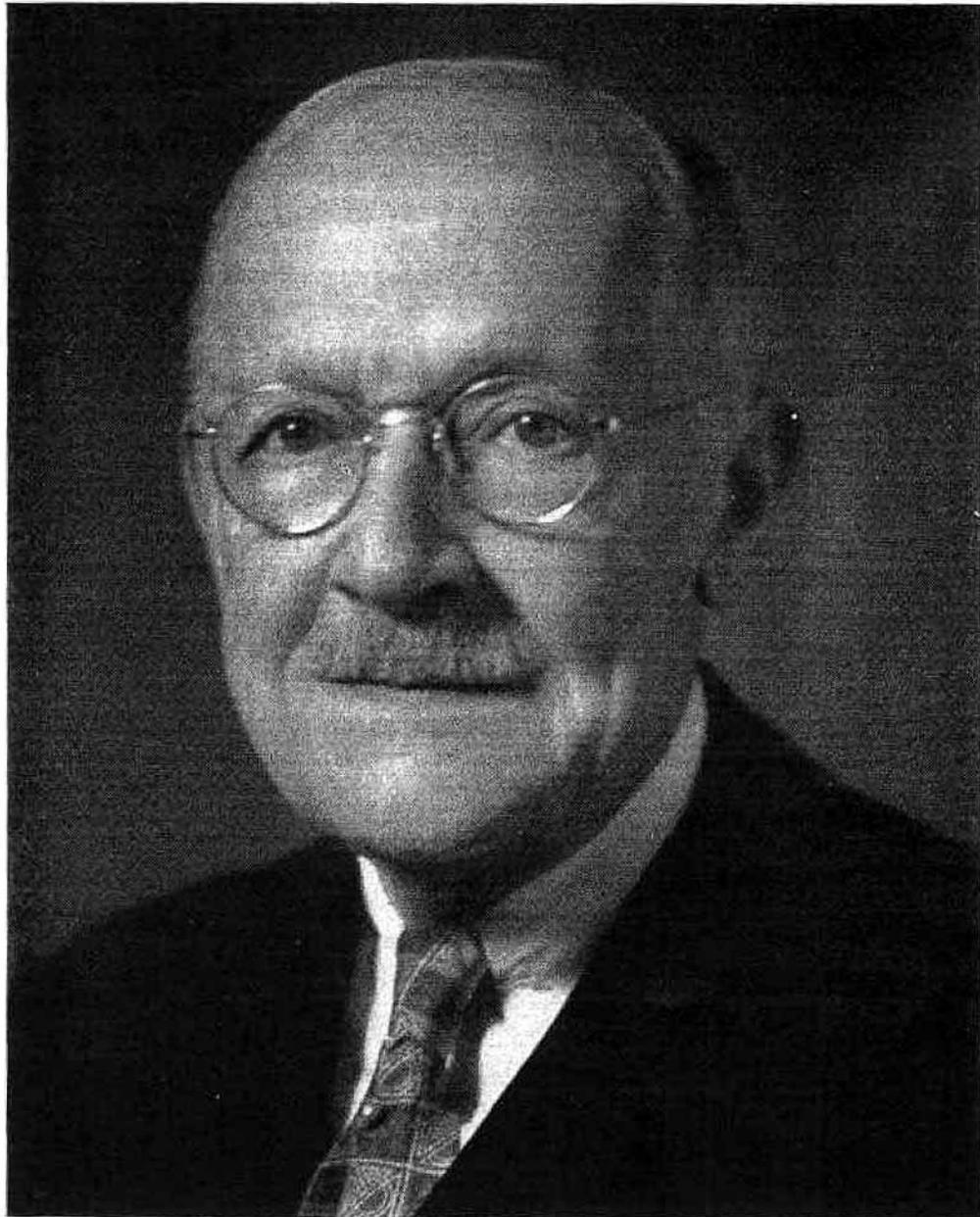
In 1909 Dr. Kosmak was appointed associate editor of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children*, and after the death of Dr. Brooks Wells he functioned as its editor until that journal discontinued publication in December of 1919. In 1920 he founded and commenced his editorship of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, the first issue of which appeared in January of that year, so that there was no interruption in the continuity of publication. He became associate editor of the *New York State Journal of Medicine* in 1944, and its editor in 1950. In 1952 Dr. Kosmak deemed it wise to lessen some of his burdens, and was made emeritus editor of both journals.

Dr. Kosmak held offices in the New York County Medical Society, the New York State Medical Society, and the American Medical Association. In the county society he served on many committees, as a delegate to the state society, as treasurer, and in 1930 as president. His officeholding in the state society began in 1927 and continued up to the time of his death. It included the chairmanship of important committees and many years as treasurer. He was a member of the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association continuously from 1935 to 1954.

Dr. Kosmak was president of the New York Obstetrical Society in 1930, of the Physicians Home from 1941 to 1944, and of the American Gynecological Society in 1942. He was perennial chairman of the medical board of the Maternity Center Association. He made many contributions to the literature, and in 1933 published his monograph, "Toxemias of Pregnancy."

George Kosmak was a stalwart character with strong convictions and many original and constructive ideas. In 1917 he participated actively in the birth control controversy. He fought long and hard for the formal licensure and supervision of midwives. He was one of Dr. Mosher's staunchest supporters in the creation of the Maternal Welfare Committee and personally sponsored the organization of the Maternity Center Association in New York City, the chief objective of both organizations being the lowering of maternal mortality. Firm in his belief that half of the deaths in childbirth were preventable, in 1917 he began a campaign to persuade the New York Academy of Medicine to authorize a special committee to study maternal mortality in New York City. His efforts were finally rewarded in 1928, when the Academy appointed a subcommittee of the Public Health Relations Committee to cooperate with the Registrar's office of the Department of Health to study in detail all the puerperal deaths over a three-year period. The condemning facts revealed by the report of this committee aroused tremendous resentment, but this proved to be temporary and was soon dissipated by an appreciation of the validity of the findings. Soon thereafter other communities throughout the country instituted similar studies, which may justifiably be credited with the recent material reduction in maternal mortality.

Those of us who were privileged to know George Kosmak intimately fully appreciated his sterling character, his intellectual honesty, his devotion to his ideals, and the warmth and loyalty of his friendship. His passing leaves a void in the hearts of his friends, as well as in the medical organizations of which he was a member.



GEORGE WILLIAM KOSMAK

1873-1954

[history-of-obgyn.com](http://history-of-obgyn.com)

THIS MONTH marks the 81st birthday of George W. Kosmak, obstetrician and gynecologist, clinician and teacher, writer and editor. OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY welcomes the opportunity to felicitate Dr. Kosmak and to participate in this anniversary for which *The American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* has put forth a "Festschrift" by way of celebration.

Dr. Kosmak was born, raised, and educated in New York City, where he attended Columbia College and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, from which he graduated in 1899. His entire life has been spent in the city of his birth but his influence has been felt everywhere. This influence was exerted always for the benefit of womankind.

It might be said of Dr. Kosmak, as Trowbridge put it—

"Not in rewards, but in the strength to strive,  
The blessing lies"

Such strength Dr. Kosmak has always had; may he continue to pass it on to those of us who follow. And yet, Dr. Kosmak has his rewards. We rejoice in this. For his achievements and opportunities have been many. He was, until recently, one of the leading practitioners of obstetrics and gynecology in New York City, Attending Surgeon at The New York Lying-in Hospital, and Obstetric Consultant to many hospitals in the New York area. He has been Treasurer and President of The American Gynecological Society, Chairman of the Medical Board of the Visiting Nurses Association and of the Maternity Center Association of New York, President of the Medical Society of the County of New York, Treasurer and then Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the New York State Medical Society. He served on the now famous Committee on Maternal Mortality of the New York Academy of Medicine, in the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association for more than 20 years, and as Editor of the *New York State Journal of Medicine*.

Dr. Kosmak's greatest opportunity and most notable achievement are found in the monument which he has built and now passed on to the two editors who have succeeded him. For 32 years, Dr. Kosmak served as Editor of *The American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* and single handed built it into a tower of strength for obstetrics and gynecology. Those of us who remember Vol. 1, No. 1 of this publication as it appeared in October, 1920, and therefore can compare it with present ones realize best the tremendous and continuing contribution which Dr. Kosmak has made to American obstetrics and gynecology. From this small beginning has developed the magnificent journal which each month we are privileged to receive. It serves as the official organ of most of the obstetric and gynecologic societies of this country and is constant evidence of the progress of our specialty.

It is our hope that Dr. Kosmak will be spared for many years to come to see his fine work continued by his able successors, Howard C. Taylor, Jr., and William J. Dieckmann, and that we may have the privilege again to pay tribute to Dr. Kosmak and his achievements. Disraeli could have had Dr. Kosmak in mind when he spoke of, "a public man of light and learning."

RALPH A. REIS, M.D.