



Close-up of Harriette Chick, from Lister Institute staff photograph, 1933. Wellcome Library, SA/LIST/R.6.

### Vitamins and Public Visibility

This photograph shows Harriette Chick in 1933. By this stage, Chick had established an international reputation for her vitamin research. Her work in the early 1920s on UV light and rickets prompted a succession of articles in the medical and broadsheet press.<sup>1</sup>

From early studies on UV light and rickets in the 1920s, Chick developed an interest in other nutritional disorders. The lectures she gave during 1932 built upon the earlier work of US surgeon **Joseph Goldberger**. The relationship between the consumption of maize and the overlapping incidence of the skin disease pellagra had remained unexplained for centuries. It was Goldberger who, as a contemporary of Chick's in the 1920s, had identified a dietary cause.<sup>2</sup> Chick conducted further experiments that would help establish the active component in yeast (vitamin B3: niacin) that helped prevent pellagra.<sup>3</sup>

These studies helped establish Chick's reputation both among fellow biochemists and the public at large. In 1932, the year before this photograph was taken, Chick had been invited to present a series of lectures in both the US and UK and received the honour of a CBE. Her research at this time was also widely reported. The *Advertiser* (Adelaide) in 1932 had referred to Chick as 'the well-known authority on vitamins', indicating both the reach and the depth of her influence.

<sup>1</sup> 'Medicine and Surgery', *The Times* (Friday 3 May 1935), p. 39; 'Sunlight and Health: Nature's Own Tonic', *The Times* (Tuesday 26 October 1937), p. 32; 'Post-War Vienna', *British Medical Journal* (15 December 1945), p. 853.

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm Friedrich, *Vitamins* (Berlin and Hawthorne, NT: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), p. 476.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: Harriette Chick (et al.), 'Experiments with Pigs on a Pellagra-Producing Diet II', *Biochemical Journal* **32** (1938), 844-854.