



Society for Menstrual Cycle Research

SPRING, 2011
NEWSLETTER

“The Science and Health of the Menstrual Cycle: **Synchronizing the World of Women’s Health**”

by Alice Dan

On April 1, 2011, a “Menstrual Cycle Awareness Think Tank” was convened at NIH in Bethesda, MD. This meeting included representatives of federal agencies, professional societies (Peggy Stubbs for SMCR), academia, consumers and industry, and was the brain-child of Larry Nelson, Head of the Integrative Reproductive Medicine Group of intramural researchers at NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development). Dr. Nelson has worked with SMCR members on the “Menstruation as a Vital Sign” project, co-sponsored by an organization he founded: Rachel’s Well, Inc. The president of Rachel’s Well, Evelina Sterling, PhD. co-chaired the think-tank meeting with Dr. Nelson and Stephanie Alexander of the Office of Women’s Health at DHHS (Dept. of Health and Human Services).

As he stated it during the meeting, Dr. Nelson’s goal is to “build community around disorders of the menstrual cycle.” The think tank brought together a variety of stakeholders in an effort to establish a consortium to formulate a strategic plan to increase awareness, education and research on the menstrual cycle, to increase visibility and significance of menstrual health, and to propose a research agenda to the Office of Women’s Health. Expert presentations ranged from Carol Markstrom on the Apache Sunrise Dance, a ritual welcoming a girl at menarche to the community of women, through medical studies relating oligo/amenorrhea to insulin resistance, cardiovascular, osteoporosis and mental health risks to sophisticated methods for using patient registries for evaluating outcomes of disease prevention.

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REGISTER NOW:

JUNE 2-4
2011

SMCR RETURNS TO PITTSBURGH

Embodied Consciousness, Informed Choices:
Critical Perspectives on the Menstrual Cycle.

“The Science and Health of the Menstrual Cycle: **Synchronizing the World of Women’s Health**” (cont.)

Participants were enthusiastic about establishing a consortium, but no clear focus for an agenda emerged. Evelina Sterling requested that those present clarify their own interests, and present what they and their organizations bring to the table, so we can begin to share resources. Further discussions will be part of the Society’s June conference in Pittsburgh. SMCR members attending in addition to Peggy Stubbs were Paula Derry, Joan Moon, and Alice Dan.

Notes from the editor

David Linton

Next Issue

We intend to publish the next issue of the newsletter in October 2011. SMCR members are encouraged to submit material as early as possible so we can keep everyone up to date with the many exciting and valuable activities they are engaged in.

Submission Deadline for next edition of the SMCR Newsletter:

SEPTEMBER 26, 2011

By and About Our Members

◆ DAVID LINTON

Building a Menstrual Filmography

SMCR members are invited to recommend titles of films that include any mention of matters menstrual. Anything from educational, avante garde, experimental, and TV programs to feature films and international productions are welcome. References to pregnancy announcements (“I’m late.”), empowerment statements, metaphors, embarrassments, casual bonding lines, insults and put downs, jokes, menarche or menopause moments and menstrual sex avoidance are sought. If possible, in addition to titles, dates or other identifying details, mention what is going on that includes the menstrual detail. Eventually, the material will be compiled, categorized and shared with the membership.

Send citations to dlinton@mmm.edu.

◆ CAROLYN A. DeFOREST, Ph.D.

In December of 2010, I launched my new product, *Ruby's Red Wash*. It is a menstrual blood stain remover made just for women (of, course) and the tag line reads 'The *bleedin' obvious solution to menstrual stains!*' The product is intended to create a least an opening for the further liberation of women and girls from the cultural and historical shame and secrecy surrounding menstruation. The creation of the product was borne out of the research of my dissertation which was entitled *The Bloody Truth: A Psychological and Cultural Study of Menstruation As Lived and Experienced by Women*. In my research, I wanted to study women's everyday, real experiences of menstruation and compare and contrast those experiences to what the culture routinely says menstruation is and how it and

women should be treated. Before conducting my research, it was my hunch that since menstruation is still highly secretive in the culture, the valuing of female being in the culture still needed much improvement.

Among the many revelations I had in my research, my questions about the real valuing of female being in the culture were confirmed, and it became apparent that cultural attitudes about menstruation have changed very little. In the midst of this research, I also realized that a very practical product for women was lacking. The lack of a product which could remove menstrual blood from women's clothing and make their lives considerably easier also pointed, again, to the fact that female being is routinely not given the same consideration as male being. When I finished my dissertation and degree, it was my goal to create that product for women, a very practical, honest, straightforward product which used humor but without the standard denigration and shame-filled language of "feminine hygiene" products. As a product, *Ruby's Red Wash* actually works and makes life easier for women on a practical everyday level, but I also hope it works to encourage women and girls to celebrate female being and to really accept themselves fully, bleeding and all, even when the culture and some individuals may only pretend to do so.

Ruby's Red Wash has been featured on The Museum of Menstruation and Women's Health website and can be found at <http://www.rubysredwash.com/>. The product website features the philosophy behind the product and a blog to which visitors and members are encouraged to read and make comments.

◆ LESLIE CAROL BOTHA

On March 8, 2011 SMCR member, and Vice President of Public Relations for SANE Vax

Inc., Leslie Carol Botha had the honor to present Global Concerns about HPV Vaccines to the esteemed members of the British Society for Ecological Medicine at their Spring Meeting in London. Other presenters included: Dr. Jayne L.M. Donegan, MBBS, MRCGP, DRGOG, DCH, General Practitioner, London; Dr. Richard Halvorsen, MB, BS, General Practitioner, London; Lucija Tomljenovic, Ph.D., University of British Columbia, Canada; Professor Michel de Lorgeril of the Faculté de Médecine de la Mercurie at the University of Grenoble, France; journalist Christina England, United Kingdom; Dr. Ellen Grant (retired), one of the founding members of the BSEM; and former British surgeon and medical researcher, Dr. Andrew Wakefield.

Botha cited numerous studies on estrogen, HPV, cervical cancer, and oral contraceptives during her presentation. She also stressed the importance of menstrual cycle evaluation in all medical procedures. Botha is currently submitting a paper to be archived in the BSEM proceedings.

◆ JOAN MOON

Joan will present a poster at The 5th International Congress on Nursing Innovations in Perth, Australia, May 18-20. Title: *Menstrual Cycle Research through Evidence-Based Innovative Technology*, and then will offer a plenary presentation at The 56th Annual Meeting of the American College of Nurse-Midwives in San Antonio, TX. Title: *Presenting the Computer-Based Educational Module "A Woman's World: Discovering the Dynamic Menstrual Cycle" for Midwifery Practice and Education*. She has also been invited to serve on the NIH Menstrual Cycle Advisory Panel.

◆ ELIZABETH J. ROWE

Elizabeth J. Rowe is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Temple

By and About Our Members (cont.)

University, and has just defended her dissertation, entitled "The Impact of the Variation in the Progesterone Receptor Gene, Life History, and Lifestyle on Uterine Function and the Menstrual Cycle". She presented her preliminary results in a poster at the 2010 Human Biology Association annual meeting in Albuquerque, NM. This work was supported by substantial dissertation grants from the National Science Foundation and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. Dr. Christie Rockwell is her dissertation advisor. Those interested can learn more about her work by visiting the website for the study, www.temple.edu/anthro/uterusresearch or by contacting her at ejrowe@temple.edu.

(**editor's note:** by the time we went to press Elizabeth had completed the requirements for the degree; congratulations Dr. Rowe!!)

◆ JESSICA CORTESE

After completing a degree in education from Middlesex County College, Jessica Cortese transferred to The College of New Jersey, where she completed a dual Bachelors degree in English and Women and Gender Studies. While at The College of New Jersey she was on the Executive Board of a leadership program known as Women in Learning and Leadership (W.I.L.L.) where she co-directed TCNJ's 2010 production of "The Vagina Monologues" and participated in numerous acts of civil disobedience and activism. Currently, she is perusing a Masters Degree in English from The College of New Jersey and works at Middlesex County College as a First-Year Experience Specialist and adjunct English professor. She encourages her students to think critically by challenging the predetermined social order, thus questioning issues of gender, social injustice, racial and sexual inequality, and all forms of activism

through safe class discussions, journaling, and portfolio creating. She has written numerous papers on the subjects of menstrual theory and product activism, and is currently researching menstruation during genocides.

An Update on "Positioning Periods: Menstruation in a Social Context", a special issue of *Sex Roles*

by Ingrid Johnston-Robledo

The special issue of *Sex Roles*, entitled "Positioning Periods: Menstruation in a Social Context" (guest editors: Peggy Stubbs and Ingrid Johnston-Robledo) is almost ready for publication but will most likely not be available until early 2012.

This collection consists of articles based on presentations at the last SMCR meeting in Spokane, WA, as well as submissions from a general Call for Papers sent out by Irene Frieze, the editor of *Sex Roles*. Authors of articles in this special issue explore and position menstruation in a broad sociocultural and political context. Specific topics include the social stigma of menstruation, contextual factors influencing and associated with early menarche and menopause, representations of menstruation and menstruating women in popular culture such as magazine ads and Twitter, and women's social location (e.g., sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, ability) as it shapes their menstrual experiences. We are also including several book reviews and a film review. Peggy and I have enjoyed collaborating together on this project and thank the authors for their patience and persistence throughout the process.

By and About Our Members (cont.)

◆ News from CeMCOR

by Chris Hitchcock, PhD

2010 to 2011 has seen some big changes in staffing at CeMCOR, the Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research, in Vancouver, BC, Canada. We received two new grants in 2010, and are starting two new research projects. We have had three members move from CeMCOR to take new opportunities, have hired two new people, and will be recruiting for a third part-time research position soon.

A Sad Farewell to Elyse and Shirin

This fall two of CeMCOR's long-time researchers left us for new and exciting opportunities in Europe.

Following her training in immunology, **Shirin Kalyan, PhD** spent 4 years as a post-doctoral fellow and then a Research Associate at CeMCOR. Last year Shirin received the Alexander von Humboldt Junior Research Fellowship supporting her 18-24 months of research in Kiel, Germany, studying immune cell responses to bisphosphonate therapy for osteoporosis.

Elyse Battistella, BSc is living in Rome, Italy, where she is enrolled in a multinational Masters in Public Health programme studying Food Security. Elyse was initially hired as a new graduate for a data entry research assistant position, but rapidly became much more than that. Elyse oversaw the CeMCOR web page, and handled the front line correspondence to our email address. Much of CeMCOR's success at enrolling over 610 women into a one-cycle research study within 16 months is due to Elyse's hard work, persistence and creativity. Elyse documented the recruitment efforts, and her paper on those

efforts is now published (Journal of Women's Health, 2010).

Both Shirin and Elyse were great members of the CeMCOR team. We wish them well, but we also miss them.

And Hello to Sarah and Bonnie

This year we hired **Sarah Charlesworth, PhD** to run a one-year research study comparing bone response to NAC (n-acetyl cysteine), a nutritional anti-oxidative supplement, in midlife women with and without anovulatory androgen excess (also called PCOS, or polycystic ovary syndrome). Sarah's PhD research involved an exercise intervention for inactive women during pregnancy. We are glad to have her with us.

Bonnie Thompson, BSc also joined us last spring as the new academic assistant for CeMCOR, replacing Lori Smithers who left to take a new job in the wine import business. Bonnie has studied in the sciences and comes from the fashion industry with extensive financial and business administration experience. She has a deep commitment to women's holistic health. She learned quickly to manage the CeMCOR website and is an excellent coordinator and collaborator. Bonnie is already indispensable.

Recruitment: Research Associate/Post-Doc for Clinical Research Study

We will soon be recruiting for a 3-year part-time position running a randomized controlled trial of oral micronized progesterone for vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes and night sweats) in perimenopausal women. Because we will be enrolling midlife women, this might be a good opportunity for a woman who is interested in returning to the scientific workplace after taking a break to raise children. Please keep us in mind, and

By and About Our Members (cont.)

spread the word. We will advertise on the CeMCOR web page.

CeMCOR Research News

Last fall we completed the observational prospective 4-cycle study “Perimenopausal Night Sweats.” We are analysing the data from 28 women and seeking funding to assay the cycle+ urine samples 21 women collected during that study.

Jerilynn C Prior, BA MD is the Scientific Director of CeMCOR, and also the Centre director for the BC centre of the Canadian Multicentre Osteoporosis Study (CaMos). CaMos recently received funding from CIHR (the primary Canadian health funding body) to continue with years 16-20 of this unique population-based longitudinal cohort study. Questionnaire data from CaMos includes extensive reproductive history data from over 6000 women ages 16-90+. We welcome enquiries about possible collaborations on analysis.

Recent Publications:

1. Kalyan S, Hitchcock CL, Sirrs S, Pudek M, Prior JC. Cardiovascular and metabolic effects of medroxyprogesterone acetate versus conjugated equine estrogen after premenopausal hysterectomy with bilateral ovariectomy. *Pharmacotherapy* 2010;30
2. Marks M, Hitchcock CL, Sathi P, Prior JC. Community Pharmacists' Therapeutic Recommendations for Menstruating Women. *Canadian Pharmacists' Journal* 2010;143
3. Prior JC, Hitchcock CL. Menstruation. In: Weiner I, Craighead WE, editors. *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*. Fourth Edition ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 2010. p. 981-983.

4. Prior JC, Hitchcock CL. The endocrinology of perimenopause: need for a paradigm shift. *Frontiers In Bioscience (Schol Ed)* 2011;3:474-486.
5. Kalyan S, Hitchcock CL, Pudek M, Prior JC. Acute effects of premenopausal hysterectomy with bilateral oophorectomy on serum lipids, hormonal values, inflammatory markers and metabolism. *Journal of Gynecologic Surgery* 2011;27 (1):9.
6. Battistella E, Kalyan S, Prior JC. Evaluation of methods and costs associated with recruiting healthy women volunteers to a study of ovulation. *Journal of women's health* 2010;19(8):1519-24.
7. Bedford JL, Prior JC, Barr SI. A prospective exploration of cognitive dietary restraint, subclinical ovulatory disturbances, cortisol, and change in bone density over two years in healthy young women. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab* 2010;95 (7):3291-9.
8. Seifert-Klauss V, Prior JC Progesterone and Bone: actions promoting bone health for women. *J Osteoporosis (open access)* 2010; p 845180.

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**Embodied
Consciousness,
Informed
Choices:**

*Critical Perspectives
On the
Menstrual Cycle*



June 2-4, 2011
Chatham University, Pittsburgh, PA

The 2011 meeting of the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research will be held at the in Pittsburgh's East End at the Woodland Road campus of Chatham University. This is a multidisciplinary conference for scholars, health care providers, counselors, public policy advocates, writers, students, teachers artists, and others interested in girls' and women's health across the lifespan as it relates to the menstrual cycle.

This year's conference theme is "Embodied Consciousness, Informed Choices: Critical Perspectives on the Menstrual Cycle".

Conference highlights include a **keynote speech by Dr. Sharra Vostral**, Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and History at the University of Illinois, and author of *Under Wraps: A History of Menstrual Hygiene Technology* (2008). Dr. Vostral's current research centers on the innovation of Rely tampons and the emergence of Toxic Shock Syndrome.

In addition, **two plenary panels** are scheduled: 1) stigma associated with menstruation, broadly considered, and 2) sustainable menstrual management in both developing and developed countries.

Other conference events include a poster session and welcoming reception early Thursday evening, and on Friday night, a banquet and entertainment.

For more information about the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research, please visit www.menstruationresearch.org

For more information about the 2011 conference, including registration details, please visit <http://menstruationresearch.org/2011conference/index.php/2011pittsburgh/SMCR2011> or contact Dr. Peggy Stubbs, conference coordinator at mstubbs@chatham.edu

Dues Notice & Making it Easier to Pay Dues

Alexandra Jacoby, Treasurer

It's that time of year, our dues-paying time of year.

If you are not already current with your membership dues, please select your membership type (one-year, two-year or one-year sliding scale) and follow the instructions for making payment (below).

For most of us, dues are due by June 1, 2011.

If you're not sure where you stand with dues, email me at alexandra@leavethecastle.com and I'll let you know.

SMCR Dues Policy and Payment Options

Dues are \$50 per year, or \$90 for two years. Members may purchase a one-year membership via self-selected sliding scale: the minimum dues payment via sliding-scale is \$20 per year. Fully employed people are expected to pay the full fee. All payments in U.S. funds please.

You may pay via check, money order, or PayPal Invoice (*new!*).

Please make your check or money order payable to: Society for Menstrual Cycle Research and mail to: Alexandra Jacoby, 333 East 45th Street, 21D, New York, NY 10017.

To pay via PayPal, please email me at alexandra@leavethecastle.com, with your full name, email address and the dues payment amount you wish to make. You will receive an invoice with instructions on how to proceed with your payment via PayPal. No checks to write or envelopes to mail. **So easy!**

Please consider including an additional amount to cover the dues for someone who cannot afford a membership.

If you have any questions, please feel free to [email me](#).

Menstrual Art

Thanks to **Josefin Persdotter** for the art work.

The Swedish title translates as, "Love Your Period," or maybe "Love the Curse." Josefin gave us both translations.

For more of Josefin's work go to her web site: <https://sites.google.com/site/lovethecurse/>

