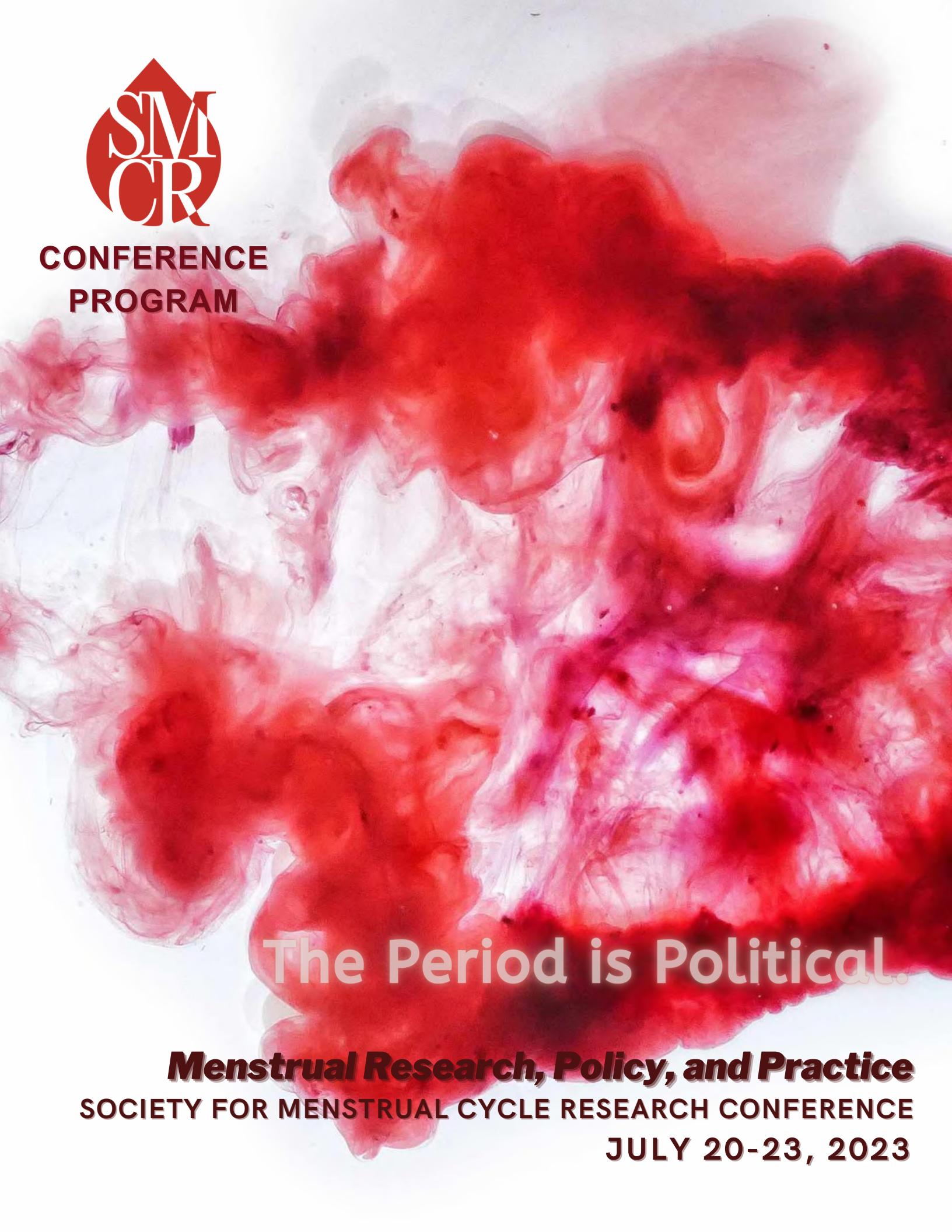




**CONFERENCE  
PROGRAM**

The background of the entire page is a photograph of red ink swirling in water, creating organic, cloud-like shapes against a white background.

**The Period is Political.**

***Menstrual Research, Policy, and Practice***

**SOCIETY FOR MENSTRUAL CYCLE RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

**JULY 20-23, 2023**

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Society for Menstrual  
Cycle Research

# SMCR PRESIDENT AND CONFERENCE CO-CHAIR WELCOME

Welcome to Bethesda, Maryland in the metro-Washington DC area and to the 24th conference of the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research! When we last met in person in Colorado for the 2019 conference, I don't think any of us imagined what the next few years would involve as we learned to live during a global pandemic. I am tremendously thankful for the work done by our Board and our members over the past few years as we strove to find ways to connect with each other virtually. That said, Jane Ussher, SMCR Past-President and 2023 Conference Co-Coordinator, and I are thrilled to come back together in person with our SMCR family!

When we first secured a conference venue in the greater Washington DC area in 2019 and began planning for what we, at the time, assumed would be our 2021 conference, the theme "The Period is Political" felt appropriate given our proximity to the US federal government. By 2022 when we knew we could move forward with an in-person conference in 2023, the theme felt even more resonant as we continued to grapple with how local and national governments reacted to the pandemic. As a US resident, the theme felt further critical to me as I witnessed challenge after challenge related to reproductive health, not the least of which was the Dobbs Supreme Court decision just over 1 year ago, result in significantly limited access to care and needed services for women, those who menstruate, and those who bear children including, but not limited to, abortion.

I am thankful that we get to come together for a few days to consider these topics together and learn from each other. We may not all share a single perspective, but if we all come together with open-mindedness and a willingness to inhabit a brave space together where we may find things challenging, I am confident that we can all grow and learn together. To that end, I am very happy that our conference planning group was able to find ways to program the conference so most of it will be spent in a plenary format. We have long had requests for this, and we took advantage of the break between conference to think about alternative ways we could program so that we could spend more time together and less time making hard decisions about what to miss.

No conference can happen without a great deal of work from a great many people. It's impossible to name everyone who has participated in the process, but I want to give particular thanks to some of those who have been particularly involved and/or helped in much needed ways.



First, none of this would be possible without the hard-work of my conference co-coordinator, Jane Ussher. Since the 2021 conference had to be cancelled, she and I share in this one, and I can imagine no better collaborator. Janette Perz and Tomi-Ann Roberts have also been central to this endeavor. I'm sure both are sick of receiving myriad emails from me, but programming and general planning relied heavily on both of them.

Saniya Lee Ghanoui and Camilla Mørk Røstvik deserve major kudos for organizing our pre-conference event at the Smithsonian, and Rachel Fikslin was, once again, incredibly dedicated to securing sponsors. Alex Hawkey, Sally King, Ashi Arora, and Carissa Pokorny-Golden also each deserve a thanks for the assorted ways they've helped with this over the past few years. Major thanks to David Linton for initially exploring venues and leading us to this location and for helping transition the Red Moon Howl to a new facilitator, and thanks to Josefin Persdotter for stepping into the facilitator role. Rosalie Power stepped up in a big way to oversee registration, Xinran Wang, our conference intern, has jumped in anywhere we asked her to, providing endless support, and Samantha Ryan was also willing to jump in on different tasks when her skills proved useful.

On behalf of SMCR, I would also like to extend a HUGE thank you to our conference sponsors! Thank you to our Platinum sponsor Lunette, who has been a major conference sponsor for our past two conferences. Thank you to our Gold Sponsors, GoMoond™ by Artemis Medical Devices Co. Ltd, Period Nirvana, and Kind Cup as well as our Bronze Sponsor, University of British Columbia - Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research (CeMCOR). Special thanks to our non-profit sponsors for your partnership and the incredible work you do: Love Your Menses, Alliance for Period Supplies, PERIOD, FemTruth Youth, and the Association for Fertility Awareness Professionals.

Finally, thanks to you all for coming together for these 4 days to share, and think, and dream together!

Mindy J. Erchull  
SMCR President and Conference Co-Chair



# SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2023

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	<b>Registration Opens</b>	<b>REGENCY FOYER</b>
	<b>Concurrent Workshops Sessions</b>	
	#1 Creating a Period Positive National Curriculum through integrated activities: A design sprint for everyone! <i>Chella Quint</i>	<b>SUSQUEHANNA ROOM</b>
	#2 The Poetics of Periods <i>Mercedes Hesselroth</i>	<b>SEVERN ROOM</b>
	#3 Reframing the Menstrual Story <i>Amy Bobeda</i>	<b>POTOMAC ROOM</b>
5:00-6:30 PM	<b>Poster Session and Welcome Reception</b> <i>Mindy Erchull, President</i> <i>Jane Ussher, Past-President</i>	<b>REGENCY BALLROOM III/IV</b>
6:45-7:30 PM	<b>Keynote Presentation</b> <i>Margaret E. Johnson</i>  “The Period is Political: Menstrual Justice, Abortion Rights & Reproductive Justice”	<b>REGENCY BALLROOM I/II</b>

FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2023

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8:00 AM	<b>Registration</b>	<b>REGENCY FOYER</b>
8:15AM-8:45PM	<b>Book Slam</b> <i>Tomi-Ann Roberts</i>	<b>REGENCY BALLROOM I/II</b>
9:00-9:45 AM	<b>Keynote Presentation</b> <i>Omisade Burney-Scott</i>  “For Lucy, Arnacha, and Betsy: Why Reproductive Justice Matters”	<b>REGENCY BALLROOM I/II</b>



## FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2023

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9:45-10:30 AM	<b>Panel #1: Menstrual Material Cultures</b> <i>Sharra Vostral, Harry Finley, Josefin Persdotter, Camilla Mørk Røstvik</i>	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
10:30-11:00 AM	<b>NETWORKING BREAK &amp; VISIT EXHIBITORS</b>	
11:00AM-12:30PM	<b>Flash Talks #1</b> Menstrual Narratives: Unveiling, Imagining and Empowering	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
12:30-1:30 PM	<b>LUNCH &amp; VISIT EXHIBITORS</b>	REGENCY BALLROOM III/IV
1:30-2:30 PM	<b>Panel #2</b> What is New in Menstruation Law & Policy Session Chair & Discussant: <i>Bridget Crawford, Marcy Karin, Laura Strausfeld, Lisa White</i>	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
2:30-4:00 PM	<b>Lunette Flash Talks #2</b> Meeting Menstrual Needs: Periods in Public Places	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
4:00-4:30 PM	<b>NETWORKING BREAK &amp; VISIT EXHIBITORS</b>	
4:30-5:30 PM	<b>Flash Talks #3</b> The Practice of Periods: Cultural- Related Menstrual Practices	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
5:45-6:30 PM	<b>SMCR Business Meeting</b>	OLD GEORGETOWN
7:00-9:00 PM	<b>DINNER OPTIONS</b> Local restaurants	



## SATURDAY, JULY 22, 2023

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8:00 AM	<b>Registration</b>	REGENCY FOYER
8:15AM-8:50PM	<b>Speed Mentoring Session</b> <i>Tomi-Ann Roberts</i>	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
9:00-10:30 AM	<b>Flash Talks #4</b> <b>Beyond the Surface: Endometriosis and Gynaecological Health</b>	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
10:30-11:00 AM	<b>NETWORKING BREAK &amp; VISIT EXHIBITORS</b>	
11:00AM-12:30PM	<b>Flash Talks #5</b> <b>Menstruation at the Intersection of Politics, Policy and Activism</b>	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
12:30-1:15 PM	<b>LUNCH &amp; VISIT EXHIBITORS</b>	REGENCY BALLROOM III/IV
1:15-2:15 PM	<b>Panel #3</b> <b>Menstruation in the Nordic Countries: Activism, Politics and Backlash in 'Feminist Frontrunner' Nations</b>  <i>Josefin Persdotter, Camilla Mørk Røstvik, Saniya Lee Ghanoui, Mie Kusk Søndergaard, Lise Ulrik Andreasen, Matleena Frisk</i>	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
2:15-3:30 PM	<b>Flash Talks #6</b> <b>The Body Speaks: LGBTQ Identities, Menstruation, PMS and Contraception</b>	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
3:30-4:00 PM	<b>NETWORKING BREAK &amp; VISIT EXHIBITORS</b>	
4:00-5:00 PM	<b>Concurrent Workshops Sessions</b>  <b>#4 From Menarche to Menopause: An intergenerational exchange about the changes our bodies experience and how we can normalize conversations about menstruation, menopause, and aging through storytelling!</b>  <i>Omisade Burney-Scott &amp; Mariah M</i>	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II



## SATURDAY, JULY 22, 2023

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	#5 Drawing Blood: Make your own menstrual ad <i>Morgan Lucero, Mikhail Collins &amp; Sydnee Carey</i>	OLD GEORGETOWN
	# 6 What you should have been taught about periods at (medical) school... but were not. Sally King	CONGRESSIONAL
5:00-6:45 PM	DINNER OPTIONS Local restaurants	
7:30-9:30 PM	Red Moon Howl - Poetry Slam Open Mic	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II

## SUNDAY, JULY 23, 2023

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9:00-10:30 AM	Flash Talks #7 Period Tech: Menstrual Products and Apps	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
10:30-11:00 AM	NETWORKING BREAK & VISIT EXHIBITORS	
11:00AM-12:00PM	Flash Talks #8 Periods in the Classroom: Menstrual Education	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II
12:00-12:30 PM	Award Announcements & Closing Celebrations	REGENCY BALLROOM I/II



Society for Menstrual  
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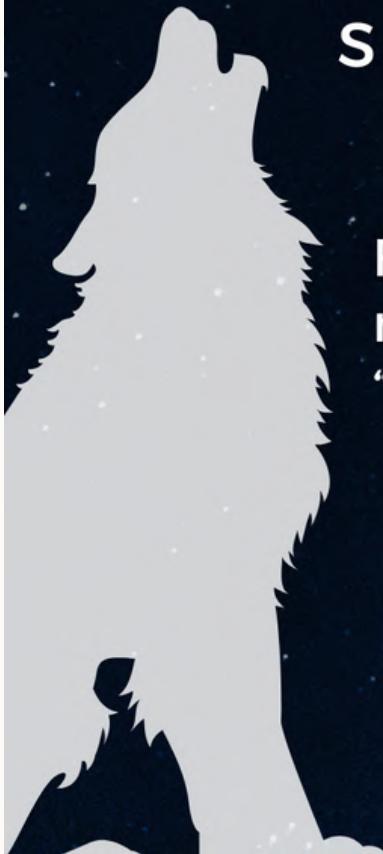
THE SOCIETY FOR MENSTRUAL  
CYCLE RESEARCH PRESENTS



# RED MOON HOWL

SMCR'S 5TH MENSTRUAL  
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For all poets, performers, and  
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7:30pm - 9:30pm  
Saturday 22nd July  
Regency Ballroom I/II

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## ESTROGEN'S STORM SEASON

*Stories of Perimenopause*

by Dr. Jerilynn Prior

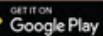


*Full of lively, realistic stories with which women can relate.*

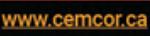
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BREAKING THE SILENCE ON MISOGYNY  
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SILVIA YOUNG

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Sondra Cosgrove  
Professor, College of Southern Nevada

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Society for Menstrual  
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# **SCHEDULE IN DETAIL**

## **POSTER PRESENTATIONS**

### **Poster Session**

**Thursday 5:00pm – 6:15 Regency Ballroom III/IV**

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#### **The Transition to Motherhood after Experiencing Infertility**

*Ellie Kerhin and Jessica Barnack-Tavlaris, The College of New Jersey, United States*

#### **Trans, Nonbinary, and Genderqueer Menstruation Related to Self-Objectification and Menstrual Cup Attitudes**

*Emma Shay and Kate Richmond, Muhlenberg College, United States*

#### **A Review of the Literature on Menstrual Attitudes and Self-Objectification**

*Jessica Barnack-Tavlaris, Sabrina Sims, Ellie Kerhin, Bianca Torres, Rhea Peddinti and Emma Taff, The College of New Jersey, United States*

#### **Menstrual dirt - An exploration of contemporary menstrual hygiene practices in Sweden**

*Josefin Persdotter, Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden*

#### **Chrysalis: A Multi-Media Reflection on Global Menstrual Health Research**

*Katarina Schneiderman, Mentor: Sara Baumann  
University of Pittsburgh, United States*

#### **Attitudes on Sterilization and Racial and Age Biases**

*Kay Tari and Kate Richmond, Muhlenberg College, United States*

#### **Reflections, Dialogues of Knowledge and Self-management of Health**

**Through Access to Information in Menstrual Sexual and Reproductive Health with Women Deprived of Liberty**

*Laura P. Contreras-Aristizábal, Medicina de Mujer, Colombia, South America*

#### **Menstrual Experiences among Female International Students within their Personal and Professional Spheres of Life in the Field of Education.**

*Marina Saladrigas Clemente, Stockholm University, Sweden and Spain*

#### **The Filmic-fluid Body: Menstrual Aesthetics in Barbara's Hammer Films (1968-2015)**

*Miriam Sánchez-Manzano, Pompeu Fabra University, Spain*

#### **Exploring the Organizations and Advocates within the Menstrual Equity and Period Poverty Movements: An Interview Study**

*Noelle Elizabeth Spencer, Malavika Eby and Stacy Bartlett  
University of Pittsburgh, United States*



# POSTER PRESENTATIONS

## Poster Session

Thursday 5:00pm – 6:15 Regency Ballroom III/IV

---

### **Menstrual Confidence in Post-Secondary Institutions**

*Abigail Suleman, University of Illinois Chicago, United States*

### **Creating a Foundation for Standardized Documentation of Adolescents' Experiences of Menstruation in Medical Charts**

*Adele Stewart, Stacy Carr, Ryan Davies, Yameika Head, Nancy Sokkary, Arin Swerlick, Melanie Vega, Megan Harrison, Sandra Reed and Andrea Swartzendruber, Emory University, United States*

### **Limitations of Current Menstrual Equity Advocacy and a Path Towards Justice**

*Allyson Crays, Northeastern University School of Law, United States*

### **Dignified Menstruation for All**

*Andrea Rodriguez Lopez, National Institute of Public Health of Mexico & Organizacion Para Cicas, Mexico*

### **Teenage Girl's Awareness and Experiences of Endometriosis in England: Implications for Menstrual Health Education and Endometriosis Support**

*Annalise Weckesser, Angela Hewett and Georgina Jones  
Birmingham City University, United Kingdom*

### **Exploring Menstrual Attitudes, Menarche and Coming of Age among Indian Adolescent Orphans Using Participatory Arts-based Approaches and Mixed Methods**

*Annika Agarwal, Sara E Baumann, University of Pittsburgh, United States*

### **Technology and the Menstrual Bias; Stolen Wombs of the Working-class Women of the 21st Century.**

*Aysha Farhana Chakkampully, Charles University, Czech Republic*

### **From Check-ins to Teach-ins: the Period Positive Global Network Offers Content, Context and Confidence**

*Chella Quint①, Zoe Chan①, Jedidah Lemaron③, & additional members of the Period Positive Global Network ①Period Positive and Sheffield Hallam University, UK; ②Happperiod & Free Periods Hong Kong; ③The Malkia initiative, Kenya*

### **Bloody War - A Review of the Existing Literature on the Association between Conflict and Menstruation in Refugee Women and Girls**

*Devina Buckshee, Yale University, United States*

# POSTER PRESENTATIONS

## Poster Session

Thursday 5:00pm – 6:15 Regency Ballroom III/IV

---

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Within the Menstrual Equity and Period Poverty Movements: An Interview Study

Noelle Elizabeth Spencer, Stacy Bartlett and Malavika Eby, University of Pittsburgh, United States

### Menstrual Hygiene Management among Transgender and Non-binary Populations: A Global Systematic Review

Priyanka Dubey, Muthusamy Sivakami, Shannon Lea Watkins<sup>1</sup>, Kelly Baker, William Story and Rima Afifi<sup>1</sup>, College of Public Health, University of Iowa, US; Center for Health and Social Sciences, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

### Testing Biodegradable Products: Their Efficacy and Claims!

Rajasi Kulkarni Diwakar, Independent researcher, Menstrual Health and Sexuality Educator/Trainer/Mentor, India

### Exploring Menstrual Traditions through Collaborative Filmmaking and Songwriting with Mothers and Grandmothers in Far-west Nepal

Korrina Gidwani, Sushma Bhatta, Laxmi Dhital, Sara E Baumann, Sara Parker, Katarina Schneiderman, University of Pittsburgh, US; Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom

### More Than One Form of Agency: Relinquishing and/or Retaining Menstrual Practices in the Nepali Diaspora in the United States

Ingrid Wenger, Sara Baumann, Isabella Wegner, Katarina Schneiderman, Sanjana Murthy and Inga Winkler, University of Pittsburgh, US; Central European University, Hungry

### Visualizing Menstruation in Nepal - Sharing Creative Visual Multimedia Outputs to Challenge Menstrual Stigma and Taboos

Sara Parker and DWD Team, Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom

### Menstrual Management among Adolescent Girls in Uttar Pradesh, India: An Examination of Interpersonal and Mediated Communication as Delivery Mechanisms for Practical Guidance

Suzanne Block, Michael Hauer, Alex Ezeh and Suruchi Sood Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, US

### Comic, Plush Costumes and Role Play: Leading Teenagers to Learn about Menstruation from Scratch

Yuan-Yi Chen, GoMoond® Artemis Medical Services Co. Ltd., Taiwan

### Building a Period-Friendly Campus: An Inter-Organizational Approach

Zoe Chan, Amy, Ho Lam (Roland) Cheng, Happeriod; The Association for the Advancement of Feminism; Saan Sing Sex and Gender Concern Group



# FLASH TALKS

## Flash Talks #1

Friday 11:00 am – 12:30 pm Regency Ballroom I/II

**Menstrual Narratives: Unveiling, Imagining and Empowering**

---

**Restoring the Menstrual Imagination**

*Amy Bobeda, Naropa University, United States*

**From Old Wives' Tales to Digital Trackers; The Shifting Social Imaginaries of Menstruation in Ireland**

*Harriet Wilkinson, Maynooth University, Ireland*

**What We Talk About When We Talk About Decolonial Menstrual Health: Perspectives to Emancipate the Menstrual Health, Latin American Experiences**

*Laura P. Contreras-Aristizábal*

*Medicina de Mujer, Colombia, South America*

**The Continued Censoring of Menstruation in Adolescent Literature**

*Carissa Pokorny-Golden*

*Pennsylvania Department of Education, United States*

**Gazing at the Sexualized Menstruator: Menstrual Stigma, Sexuality and Desire in I Love Dick and I May Destroy You**

*Bridgette Glover, University of New England, Australia*

**The Impact of the Online Menstrual Movement on Teenagers' attitudes towards menstruation: Reducing Stigma and Inspiring Offline Micro-Activism**

*Maria Tomlinson, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom*



# FLASH TALKS

## Lunette Flash Talks #2

Friday 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm Regency Ballroom I/II

### Meeting Menstrual Needs: Periods in Public Places

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#### Young People's Experiences of Menstrual Injustice in South Australia

Helen Connolly, South Australian Government, Australia

#### Menstruation and the World of Work Organizations

Petra Poncarová, Charles University, Czech Republic

#### Menstrual Cycle in the Professional Context: Multiple Experiences and Common Concerns

Aline Boeuf, University of Geneva, Switzerland

#### They seem to only know about bleeding and cramps: Understanding menstruation experiences in sport and the coach-athlete relationship

Anna Goorevich, University of Minnesota, Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, United States; Sarah Zipp, Mount St. Mary's University, United States

#### Stratified Menstruation: Implications for Menstrual Health

Rebecca Martinez, Purdue University, United States; Risa Cromer, Purdue University, United States

#### Menstrual Activism in Chile: A Feminist Analysis for Positioning

#### Menstruation as a Social and Political Issue

Sofia Cifuentes, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Chile

#### The Menstrual Health Research Network of Aotearoa New Zealand

Bryndl Hohmann-Marriott, Arianna Nisa-Waller, Claire Henry, Michael Pankhurst and Jane Girling, University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand

#### Building a Period-friendly Environment in Public Spaces, Campuses, and Private-own spaces with Public-Private-People-Partnership

Vivi Lin & Yin-Chu Lin, With Red & Period Museum, Taiwan and United Kingdom

#### Fall River Menstrual Equity Report

Hannah Wilcove, Brandeis University, United States; Sasah Goodfriend, Mass NOW, United States; Charlotte Powley, Simons University, United States; Lauren Leonardis, Mother and Changemaker Consulting, United States

#### The fear of leaking: The life and work of models menstruating on the job

Aripta Sinha, Washington State University, United States



# FLASH TALKS

## Flash Talks #3

Friday 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm Regency Ballroom I/II

### The Practice of Periods: Cultural-related Menstrual Practices

---

#### "Flower of the Body" Menstrual Experiences and Needs of Adolescent Women with Cerebral Palsy in Bangladesh, and their Mothers Providing Support

*Rosalie Power, Western Sydney University, Australia*

#### Menstrual Practices among Hindu Families of Western Nepal: Normative Versus Contemporary Practices

*Rajya Laxmi Gurung, Dignity Without Danger, Tribhuvan University; Sara Parker, Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom; Madhusudan Subedi, Patan Academy of Health Sciences, Nepal*

#### Harnessing Human Centered Design Tools to Address Chhaupadi (Menstrual Seclusion) in Nepal

*Megan Rabin, Sara Baumann, Bhimsen Devkota, Kajol Upadhyaya, Guna Raj Shrestha, Mary Hawk and Jessica Burke, University of Pittsburgh, US*

#### Menstrual Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices among the Indigenous Tribal Groups of Nagarhole and Bandipur National Parks of Karnataka, India

*Sanjana Murthy, Sara E Baumann, University of Pittsburgh, United States; Dennis D Chauhan, Vivekananda Memorial Hospital, India*

#### Dignity Without Danger; Challenging Menstrual Discrimination through Creative Multimedia Outputs Insights from Nepal

*Sara Parker and DWD Team, Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom*

#### (Re)Negotiating the Menstruating Bodies in the Climate Action Framework.

*Aysha Farhana Chakkampully, Charles University, Czech Republic*



# FLASH TALKS

## Flash Talks #4

Saturday 9:00 am – 10:30 am Regency Ballroom I/II

### Beyond the Surface: Endometriosis and Gynecological Health

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#### From Humanities to Applied Health Sciences: The Possibilities of an Interdisciplinary Approach to Menstrual Health

Charley Jones<sup>①</sup>, Camilla Mørk Røstvik<sup>②</sup>, Siladitya Bhattacharya<sup>①</sup>,  
Lucky Saraswat, <sup>①</sup>University of Aberdeen, Scotland; <sup>②</sup>University of Agder, Norway

#### Patient-Provider Dynamics Around Menstruation-Related Concerns

Rachel Fikslin, and Ellie Seohyun Lee, Seton Hall University, United States

#### Situating the Female Body, Clinical and Everyday Distinctions

Mie Kusk Søndergaard<sup>①</sup>, Rikke Sand Andersen, Dorte Ejg Jarbøl and Sara Marie Hebsgaard Offersen, <sup>①</sup>University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

#### Faulty Bodies, Faulty Women: Joe Vincent Meigs and The Rise of Endometriosis, 1861-1949

Maria Rovito, Pennsylvania State University, United States

#### Endometriosis: Pain, Politics, Public Health and the Power of Patients

Heather Guidone, BCPA, Center for Endometriosis Care, United States

#### Pelvic Pain, Work Disruptions, and Medical Racism Among Black Women in the Washington DC Metropolitan Area: A Preliminary Report of the ENDO-Served study.

Julia Mandeville, Lauren Kornegay, Nene Uwaomah, Anna Pollack and Jhumka Gupta, George Mason University, United States

#### A Blood Alliance? Critical Reflections on Endometriosis Advocacy and the Menstrual Equity Movement

Annalise Weckesser, Birmingham City University, United Kingdom

#### Alterations of the Menstrual Cycle of Young Adults not Occupationally Exposed to a Mixture of Pesticides from an Agricultural Area of San Luis Potosí, Mexico. A pilot study

Andrea Rodríguez-López<sup>①②</sup>, Rebeca Mejía-Saucedo, Jaqueline Calderón Hernández, Vanessa Labrada-Martagón and Leticia Yáñez-Estrada, <sup>①</sup>National Institute of Public Health of México; <sup>②</sup>Organizacion para Chicas, Mexico

#### The New Science of Menses - Not Your Mother's Period

Nancy King Reame and Hilla Shaviv, Columbia University School of Nursing, United States



# FLASH TALKS

## Flash Talks #5

Saturday 11:00 am – 12:30 pm Regency Ballroom I/II

**Menstruation at the Intersection of Politics, Policy and Activism**

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**The Period is Political: Menstruation Begins with Blood**

*Shaka Ramanathan and Jill Wood, Pennsylvania State University, United States*

**The Role of Policy in Advancing Discussion and Change Around Menstrual Equity and Period Poverty: a Concept Mapping Study**

*Noelle Elizabeth Spencer and Malavika Eby, University of Pittsburgh, United States*

**Is the Priority Vaccines or Pads? The Brazilian Government's Veto on Menstrual Health Care During the COVID-19 Crisis**

*Isabela Hümmelgen, Central European University, Austria*

**The Importance of Advocates in Policy Development Processes for Menstrual Health, A Case Study of the Kenyan Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Policy and Strategy**

*Sophie Collins, Hayley MacGregor and Maya Unnithan, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), United Kingdom*

**Human Rights in the Menstrual Movement: Reductionism and Renewed Potential from Below**

*Inga Winkler, Central European University, Austria*

**Commercialization of menstrual hygiene in the Nordics: Business history explaining access to disposable menstrual products in Post WW II Finland, Sweden, and Norway**

*Matleena Friske, University of Helsinki, Finland*

**Extremely Intimate and Incredibly Public, Free Menstrual Products and, the Problem, of Menstruation in the Finnish Public Discourse**

*Aino Koskenniemi, University of Helsinki, Finland*

**Sing the Power of Film and Participatory Research for Menstrual Policy Action in Nepal**

*Sara Baumann<sup>①</sup>, Sara Parker<sup>②</sup>, Madhusudan Subedi<sup>③</sup>, BK Shrestha<sup>④</sup>, Jyotika Rimal and Tatiana Matuszewski, University of Pittsburgh, United States; Sara Parker<sup>②</sup>, Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom; <sup>③</sup>Patan Academy of Health Sciences, Nepal; <sup>④</sup> Global Action Nepal*

**Slowing Down to Better Represent: The Role of Longitudinal Studies in Menopause Research**

*Nomi Redding, Independent Researcher, United States*



# FLASH TALKS

## Flash Talks #6

Saturday 2:15 pm – 3:30 pm Regency Ballroom I/II

**The Body Speaks: LGBTQ Identities, Menstruation, PMS and Contraception**

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**Out with Cancer: Negotiating Cis-Heteronormative Constructions of Cancer and Cancer Care**

*Jane Ussher, Janette Perz, Rosalie Power and the Out with Cancer Study Team  
Western Sydney University, Australia*

**Lived Experiences of Menstrual Hygiene Management among Transgender and Non-Binary Populations in Urban India: A Qualitative Approach**

*Priyanka Dubey<sup>①</sup>, Muthusamy Sivakami<sup>②</sup>, Shannon Lea Watkins<sup>①</sup>, Kelly Baker<sup>①</sup>, William Story<sup>①</sup> and Rima Afifi<sup>①</sup>, ①College of Public Health, University of Iowa, United States; ②Centre for Health and Social Sciences, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India*

**Menstrual Materialities; An Ethnographic Study of Danish Menstrual Experiences and Bodily Understandings.**

*Signe Banke, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark*

**Managing the Premenstrual Body: A Body Mapping Study of Women's Negotiation of Premenstrual Food Cravings and Exercise**

*Samantha Ryan, Jane M. Ussher & Alexandra Hawkey, Western Sydney University, Australia*

**Managing the Premenstrual Body: A Body Mapping Study of Women's Negotiation of Premenstrual Food Cravings and Exercise**

*Samantha Ryan, Jane M. Ussher & Alexandra Hawkey, Western Sydney University, Australia*

**Recent Social-behavioral Research on Changes to the Menstrual Cycle While Using Contraception: Evidence from Six Studies Across Seven Countries in East and West Africa**

*Amelia Mackenzie, Emily Hoppes, Stephanie Chung, Aurélie Brunie, Rebecca Callahan, Dawn Chin-Quee, Marga Eichleay, Elena Lebetkin and Kate Rademacher FHI 360, United States*

**A Global Research and Learning Agenda for Building Evidence on Contraceptive-Induced Menstrual Changes for Research, Product Development, Policies, and Programs**

*Emily Hoppes, Emily Hoppes and Amelia Mackenzie, The contraceptive-induced menstrual changes (CIMC) Task Force; FHI 360, United States*

**Implications of Hormonal Birth Control for Bodies Navigating Systemic and Generational Trauma**

*Ashi Arora and Haley Garcia, SoulFlow Healing, United States*



# FLASH TALKS

## Flash Talks #7

Sunday 9:00 am – 10:30 am Regency Ballroom I/II

Period Tech: Menstrual Products and Apps

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### **Menstrual Apps as Medical Information and Self Knowledge**

*Bryndl Hohmann-Marriott, Jane Girling, Tiffany Williams, University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand*

### **Understanding the Use and Influence of Menstrual Cycle Tracking and Menstrual Health Education Apps Among Girls: An Ethnographic Study in Bali, Indonesia**

*Heather Amy Suttor①, Putri Yamayantil, Tungga Dewi②, Eka Purni③, Julie Hennegan④ & Richard Chenhall①, ①University of Melbourne, Australia; ②Perfect Fit, Indonesia; ③Kisara/IPPF, Bali; ④Burnet Institute, Australia*

### **Hormonal Health: Promises and Pitfalls of Arranging One's Life Around Hormone Cycles**

*Andrea Ford, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom*

### **MenstrualCup: Exploring Menstrual Management Online in Uncertain Times as a Posthuman Phenomenon.**

*Amelia Ignire, Cardiff University, United Kingdom*

### **Use of Reusable Menstrual Products: An Ecofeminist Practice**

*Anna Kubovski, University of Haifa, Israel*

### **More than Menstrual Equality: Towards Menstrual Abundance**

*Yuan-Yi Chen and Wen-Fei Shih, GoMoond®, Artemis Medical Services, Taiwan*

### **A New Approach to MHM in a Precarious Political Environment**

*Zala Ahmad and Rachel Lehr, Safe Path Prosperity and University of Colorado Boulder, United States*

### **Celebrating Green Lobbying in Menstrual Matters**

*Rajasi Kulkarni Diwakar, Independent researcher, Menstrual Health and Sexuality Educator/Trainer/Mentor, India*

### **The (Social) Business of Menstruation: What Does it Take for Social Entrepreneurs to Succeed in their Dual Mission?**

*Maria Carmen Punzi and Pursey Heugens, Erasmus University, The Netherlands*



# FLASH TALKS

## Flash Talks #8

Sunday 11:00 am - 12:00 pm Regency Ballroom I/II

Periods in the Classroom: Menstrual Education

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**Black Box: The Reduction and Mystification of the Menstrual Cycle in Western School and Medical Education**

*Dr Sally King, Menstrual Matters and Sociological Review Fellow, United Kingdom*

**Worlding Possibilities with Young Menstruants: Feminist New Materialist Pedagogies**

*Lise Ulrik Andreasen, Aarhus University, Denmark*

**A Period Positive Curriculum for England: A Policy Implementation Case Study from Start to nearly Finished!**

*Chella Quint, Period Positive, Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom*

**Exploring menarche and menstrual experiences of National and International Primary Teachers in Catalonia and Sweden.**

*Marina Saladrigas Clemente, Stockholm University, Sweden and Spain*

**Analyzing the Role of Menstrual Health Literacy on how Menstruation is Experienced in Spain**

*Sara Sánchez López①, Dani Barrington, Santiago Moll López and Rocío Poveda Bautista, ①Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain*

**Education as an Equalizer: Assessing the Impact of Resources for Menstruation in Addressing Menstrual Discrimination in Nepal**

*Babu Kaji Shrestha, Sara Parker②, Angela Daly, Kishor Shrestha and Shreekrishna Weinju, ①Global Action Nepal; ②Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom*

# KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

## For Lucy, Arnacha, and Betsy: Why Reproductive Justice Matters Omisade Burney-Scott

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*Creator of The Black Girl's Guide to Surviving Menopause*

Omisade Burney-Scott (she/her) is the Creator and Curator of the Black Girl's Guide to Surviving Menopause. In her presentation, Ms. Burney-Scott delves into the fascinating intersection between Reproductive Justice and Menopause, emphasizing the importance of an intersectional approach. Menopause, a natural transition in a woman's life, is often accompanied by unique challenges and experiences that can be further compounded by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other social factors.

Ms. Burney-Scott's exploration aims to shed light on the interconnectedness of these issues and advocate for a more comprehensive understanding of menopause within the framework of Reproductive Justice. By examining the intersectional throughline, the presentation not only highlights the diverse experiences of menopausal individuals but also underscores the need for inclusive support systems, policies, and resources to ensure equitable health outcomes for all women traversing this transformative stage of life.

## The Period is Political: Menstrual Justice, Abortion Rights & Reproductive Justice

**Margaret E. Johnson**

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*Professor of Law and Co-Director of the Center on Applied Feminism,  
The University of Baltimore School of Law, United States*

In the United States, individuals who menstruate and experience peri/menopause (menstruators) are subject to injustices. These injustices include exclusion; essentialization; discrimination and harassment, including constitutional and human rights violations; insults and indignities; economic disadvantages; and health disadvantages. Menstruators are monitored, controlled, and harmed by law, policy, and practice. Menstrual injustices reflect patriarchal oppression and structural intersectionality based on the interconnection of sex and other marginalized social identities. As with other manifestations of intersectional oppression, menstrual injustices result in the control of menstruators' bodies, reproduction, pregnancy, and access to abortion, especially of those most marginalized because of gender, race, gender identity, disability, and other social identities.



Since the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization eradicating the federal constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy and resultant proliferation of civil and criminal laws regulating access to abortion care, menstruators and their menstrual cycles have been subject to even greater surveillance and social control. The one-year anniversary of Dobbs has been a year of destabilization, awareness, and resistance. Work to curb reproductive injustices, including menstrual injustices, can be beneficially informed by seeking stabilization, increased awareness, and continued resistance, including legislative reform campaigns, defensive advocacy, and individual and collective storytelling.



# WORKSHOPS

## #1 Creating a Period Positive National Curriculum through integrated activities: A design sprint for everyone!

Chella Quint

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*Period Positive and Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom*

In this session facilitated by qualified teacher and menstrual education activist Chella Quint, conference attendees from every discipline are invited to explore hands-on creative ways to integrate the four types of menstrual literacy: Body literacy, product literacy, media literacy and cultural literacy, into school and community menstruation education programmes.

The workshop takes as its starting point the Period Positive curriculum model: a way to map and contextualise the skills, knowledge and understanding that will best support all young people, whether they menstruate or not, and provide a clear progression from topic to topic as they grow. Educators can find menstruation-related facts, stimulus texts, artefacts and situations which can be incorporated into other subjects and act as a real-life application of the concept being taught. When lesson planning, this programme of study works best in tandem with the Period Positive Pledge, a framework for creating ethical resources and learning and working environments that are more inclusive of menstruating pupils, staff, and visitors.

Workshop participants will:

- Try out and evaluate activities created by young people and teachers as part of a design sprint putting together cross-curricular lesson plans (including Period Pompeii!)
- Participate in a design sprint activity creating prototypes for new lessons that can be tried and shared within and beyond the session
- Seek mutual support for pitfalls and hazards when navigating sensitive topics in this space with policymakers and service users
- Think about what a programme of well-rounded menstruation education curriculum would include relevant to specific communities
- Explore ways this model could fit into and enhance existing menstrual literacy strategies in their area
- Plan opportunities trialling and disseminating future curriculum content and how to build this into the process of lobbying for a curriculum model or education policy locally

Takeaways include practical activities, techniques for regionalising a curriculum model, a sample curriculum and lesson prototypes (including polymer clay uterus models!).



## #2 The Poetics of Periods

**Mercedes Hesselroth**

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*Writer, Dramatist, Songwriter, United States*

In this generative writing workshop, participants will be guided through a series of readings and prompts in order to develop their own creative writing inspired by the menstrual cycle and SMCR presentations. A digital packet of poems will be read and discussed as a group to explore how the poetic forms of the ode, the haiku, the answer song, and found poetry can be used to explore themes of connection, change, and cyclical. Participants will have time to write in response to workshop prompts and, if they choose, share their work at the Red Moon Howl!

## #3 Reframing the Menstrual Story

**Amy Bobeda**

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*Naropa University, United States*

The cultural menstrual story embeds itself in blood symbolism from early childhood stories to daily media interpretations of the reproductive cycle. Ancient stories weave menstrual songlines into symbols to share with future generations. Unfortunately, today, these symbols are lost, forgotten, or unrecognizable, leaving menstruators with cultural conventions of shame, secrecy, and isolation. From the fairytale Bluebeard and the Bloody Chamber and The Handless Maiden to the inner critic and menstrual dreams this workshop uses artistic and contemplative exercises to unlock the other side of classic menstrual storylines and build solidarity and reflections among participants. Working with menstrual fairytales, memories, our dreams, and art practices like collage, blind contour drawing, and poetry, we will identify creative blocks and re-write our menstrual stories in collaborative practices.

Through reframing, left/right brain integration, and collaboration, this one-hour workshop helps participants return to the menstrual hut for solidarity and healing on individual and collective levels.

Takeaways from this workshop include:

- Identifying the inner critic as a product of the man-made world.
- Practices for deepening personal menstrual artistic practices.
- Prompts for students, circles, and groups.
- Simple contemplative exercises and dream practices to use at any time.



## # 4 From Menarche to Menopause: An intergenerational exchange about the changes our bodies experience and how we can normalize conversations about menstruation, menopause, and aging through storytelling!

**Omisade Burney-Scott & Mariah M**

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Omisade Burney-Scott (she/her), the Creator and Curator, and Mariah M. (she/they), Creative Director of the Black Girl's Guide to Surviving Menopause, will lead a session that explores the shared experiences and narratives between menarche and menopause. Menarche is the onset of menstruation, while menopause is the cessation of menstruation. These milestones involve unique physical, emotional, and social changes in the lives of women, femmes, trans, genderqueer, and nonbinary people. Ms. Burney-Scott and Mariah M. will use an innovative discussion deck called "Say More" to guide participants on an intergenerational journey.

The goal is to foster a deeper understanding of the connective tissue that exists across generations. During the interactive session, participants will share their stories, exchange insights, and engage in meaningful discussions. This creates a supportive and inclusive environment that honors the experiences of all.

## # 5 Drawing Blood: Make your own menstrual ad

**Morgan Lucero, Mikhail Collins & Sydnee Carey**

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*Arizona State University, United States*

In reviewing the history of menstrual advertisements from the last hundred years, messages about gender, race, class, and 'proper' bodies have emerged alongside moral ideologies that maintain and perpetuate stigma (Winkler & Bobel, 2021). Given the way that advertisements influence how people feel about, manage, and construct menstruation (Mucedola, 2017), we want to invite participants in our workshop to both critique and 'talk back' to period advertisements. Reframing and retooling menstrual advertisements in the forms of spoofs, playful forms of creativity, and DIY work can reframe menstrual advertisements as a potential site of resistance rather than a powerful tool of neoliberalism and capitalism. Our workshop, 'Drawing Blood: Create Your Own Menstrual Ad' aims to inspire people to fight back against the negative stigmas about menstruation that ads throughout the decades have helped create. This workshop will focus on crafting and DIY work, using existing menstrual advertisements from the last 100 years as a canvas upon which participants will cut up, create, and reimagine menstrual ads as tools of resistance.



We will have a table separated into sections for each decade. The sections will showcase menstrual ads from that decade and will include an informative analysis about what each decade focused on about menstruating. We will have poster boards, art supplies, and cut-outs from the historic ads for people to create their own ads. Participants should expect an informative and creative session focused on play and resistance, where participants will both learn about changing imagery found in menstrual ads, and work to reimagine those ads in a collective space of creativity. In this hour-long workshop, participants are encouraged to push back creatively against the views of corporations and make ads that re-envision the imagery of menstruation and menstruating bodies.

## # 6 What you should have been taught about periods at (medical) school... but were not.

Sally King

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Menstrual Matters and Sociological Review Fellow, United Kingdom

A simple and fun overview of menstrual and menopausal physiology beyond the 'hormonal' model which completely up-ends what we think we know about the purpose and nature of our cyclic and menopausal bodily experiences. This content is evidence-based and integrates feminist perspectives on what has previously been a bit of a 'no-go' area within critical menstruation studies. Learn about how special we are to have evolved a menstrual cycle and extended menopausal life, our fellow menstruating and menopausal mammalian pals, and how improved knowledge of our bodies can improve our sense of self-worth, health, and give us more options in life.



# PANEL DISCUSSIONS

## Panel #1 Menstrual Material Cultures

Sharra Vostral<sup>①</sup>, Harry Finley<sup>②</sup>, Josefina Persdotter<sup>③</sup>, Camilla Mørk Røstvik<sup>④</sup>

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<sup>①</sup>Purdue University; <sup>②</sup>Museum of Menstruation; <sup>③</sup>Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, <sup>④</sup>University of Agder

What is menstrual material culture, and why does it matter? From blood and dirt, to tampons and pads, to corporations and collections, material culture can tell us a lot about how menstruation is historically perceived, vicariously lived, and contemporarily experienced. In this multi-disciplinary roundtable session, we discuss three interlinked topics together:

### **What is menstrual material culture, and why does it matter?**

The panelists will discuss their research about products, art, blood, dirt, advertising, historical documents, literature, and more and how it intersects with Critical Menstruation Studies. Objects and the belief systems that support and/or disparage menstrual material culture are significant factors in understanding broader ideologies about menstruation and its relationship to individuals.

### **What are the roles of archives and collections in Critical Menstruation Studies?**

Collecting and curating menstrual materials has been fraught, in part related to the ephemeral nature of menstrual products considered to be garbage, but also the low esteem in which these objects have been held. The panel will grapple with questions such as: How can menstrual material culture be collected and presented, and what are the opportunities and problems inherent in doing so? How have archives and collections shaped scholarly and public understandings of menstruation and menstrual material culture? What kind of items have been privileged, and what has been forgotten? How have corporations, institutions, and private collectors tried to preserve menstrual culture? The questions explore the place and significance of memory in public meaning making about menstruation.

### **Is menstrual material culture really research data?**

Material culture, and menstrual material culture, do not compress neatly into data sets or digital data. This makes it especially useful to interrogate in relation to the field of Critical Menstruation Studies, which tends to be grounded empirically within the social sciences and concerned with basic scientific research, also reflected in the SMCR's own mission. Yet, material culture provides vital context in the form of qualitative evidence, which can broadly interrogate corporate and industrial data, including objects, networks, and outputs. What is the status of material culture in the field, and do humanities scholars do enough to show that it provides valuable evidence



## Panel #2 What is New in Menstruation Law & Policy

**Bridget Crawford<sup>①</sup>, Marcy Karin<sup>②</sup>, Laura Strausfeld<sup>③</sup>, Lisa White<sup>③</sup>**

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<sup>①</sup>Pace University; <sup>②</sup>University of the District of Columbia; <sup>③</sup>Period Law

Since 2017, there has been a surge in activity at the intersection of law and menstruation. This work includes state-by-state efforts to repeal the tampon tax, federal legislation making menstrual products eligible for purchase with flexible spending accounts, and state and local efforts to get schools, prisons and other public places stocked with menstrual products. Most recently, the United States Department of Education said that it was considering making menstrual product availability in schools part of its regulations under Title IX. The District of Columbia recently mandate and implement health education standards and menstrual education designed for all students regardless of gender. The availability of menstrual products in prisons and detention centers remain inconsistent or non-existent, despite the presence of some federal legislation guaranteeing access in federal prisons and some similar laws enacted by states. Where has law and policy been successfully a part of menstrual advocacy efforts? Where have law and policy fallen short? Why have most of the legal victories to date been product-oriented? How can law and policy be an effective tool for combating menstrual (and menopause-related) stigma, shame, and discrimination? To what extent does menopause-related advocacy implicate different concerns, strategies or laws than menstrual advocacy?

Panelists include law professors actively engaged in the field who will report from the "front lines" on their research, advocacy, and advisory work, and leaders of a national menstrual law and advocacy non-profit.

- Bridget Crawford - Law and the Menstrual Movement
- Marcy Karin - Law, Policy, and Reform in the U.S. and Beyond
- Laura Strausfeld - Law and Policy at the Federal Level: What's Next?
- Lisa White - Law and Policy at the State Level: A Survey



# Panel #3 Menstruation in the Nordic Countries: Activism, Politics and Backlash in 'Feminist Frontrunner' Nations

**Josefin Persdotter<sup>①</sup>, Camilla Mørk Røstvik<sup>②</sup>, Saniya Lee Ghanoui<sup>③</sup>,  
Mie Kusk Søndergaard<sup>④</sup>, Lise Ulrik Andreasen<sup>⑤</sup>, Matleena Frisk<sup>⑥</sup>**

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<sup>①</sup>*Chalmers University of Technology*; <sup>②</sup>*University of Agder*; <sup>③</sup>*University of Texas*; <sup>④</sup>*University of Southern Denmark*; <sup>⑤</sup>*Aarhus University*; <sup>⑥</sup>*University of Helsinki*

The Nordic nations (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland and associated regions and territories) are known for gender equality, feminist movements, and relaxed attitudes to nudity and sexuality. Based on these cultural characteristics, one might assume that menstrual research and activism has favorable conditions in the region. Yet, despite the 'Nordic brand' of gender equality, menstrual scholarship and activism have in later decades uncovered how there are persistent gaps in knowledge about menstruation in general and menstrual health and associated stigma. This goes for both menstrual history and contemporary situations in countries across the Nordic region. Menstrual activism has enjoyed widespread appraisal, both within and outside of the region, and Nordic menstrual activism has been heralded as a good example, e.g. by the BBC. However, there has also been notable backlash to much of this work. Politicians and social media users alike have retaliated loudly against suggestions of period poverty provisions, menstrual rights in the workplace, and exhibitions of menstrual art in public spaces, often leading to heated debates, antagonism and polarization.

Following presentations, the panel will be dedicated to a conversation between the scholars centered on the following thematic questions:

## **Researching the region**

- What are the conditions for menstrual research situated in the Nordic countries?
- What is specific about menstruation in the region today and in the past?
- Are there particular cultural, linguistic and everyday specifics to the ways in which menstruation is discussed within and across the region?
- How do we, as researchers and activists, grapple with the language boundaries and opportunities across the region?
- How is the research affected by political and public backlash?

## **Nordic menstrual politics**

- Does the backlash against menstrual research, art and activism have specific cultural/linguistic/national factors across the region?
- Is there such a thing as Nordic menstrual politics?
- How is menstruation discussed in political arenas across the region, if at all? How have recent elections and changes in power structures affected the debate, if at all?
- How do politics influence menstruators in the region?
- What is the current state of menstrual activism and politics in the region? What might happen in the future?

# FLASH TALK AND POSTER ABSTRACTS

## A new approach to MHM in a precarious political environment

Zala Ahmad and Rachel Lehr

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*Safe Path Prosperity; University of Colorado Boulder, US*

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is particularly challenging for girls and women living under impoverished conditions. Access to safe, hygienic, and affordable products is only one of numerous obstacles to MHM. Shame, stigma, limited bodily awareness, economic dependence and available clean water make many aspects of MHM distinctly problematic. Afghanistan, one of the world's poorest countries, has been devastated by decades of conflict and political instability. In 2022 the World Economic Forum reported that Afghanistan is the worst country in the world for women. Against this backdrop, Safe Path Prosperity, a new women-owned and operated social enterprise in Afghanistan, employs Afghan women to produce Safepad - reusable menstrual pads for Afghan women. Using cutting edge antimicrobial technology, Safepad are highly absorbent, washable, affordable and are the only product of its kind in Afghanistan; they are being produced by the tens of thousands every month, for local distribution.

Despite the political precarity with education suspended beyond primary for all female students and a curtailment of employment for women in the numerous sectors, Safe Path Prosperity is a growing enterprise, as it continues to provide jobs for socially and economically vulnerable women who are struggling to survive. Safe Path Prosperity's impact is multi-pronged. The company generates income for vulnerable families while the product preserves dignity and builds confidence. Safe Path Prosperity raises awareness about MHM and addresses period poverty through educational materials and training.

This paper discusses the social context of MHM in Afghanistan, the taboos and myths about menstruation that portray women and girls as inferior to boys and men and attitudes toward gender parity, education, rights and opportunities. We show how Safe Path Prosperity addresses these issues from a local perspective in a culturally and politically sensitive environment.

## Exploring Menstrual Attitudes, Menarche and Coming of Age among Indian Adolescent Orphans Using Participatory Arts-based Approaches and Mixed Method

Annika Agarwal and Sara E Baumann

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*University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health, US*

In working with people who have complex PTSD and have utilized hormonal BC, our clients' experiences have confirmed what has long been overlooked by the western medical system: the disruption of physiological endocrine systems and psychological health by this treatment.



In many instances, clients were prescribed BC to treat symptoms of hormone imbalance such as acne and irregular menses, rather than the root causes such as high levels of stress and cortisol. Surveys of people's experiences with birth control are currently being collected. While on hormonal BC, clients have faced anxiety, depression, weight gain, and other symptoms. When clients stop using it, they have faced amenorrhea, hypothyroidism/hyperthyroidism, anxiety, depression, weight gain, immune-related symptoms, and ovarian cysts -- all symptoms of hormonal imbalance that existed prior to taking birth control or worsened. Therefore, for folks who have endured long periods of stress and trauma (cultural, systemic, and/or generational), their body's ability to heal is disrupted. It is important to understand the implications of birth control on people's bodies in the context of the relentless attacks on reproductive rights. This presentation will provide a deep dive into people's lived experiences with hormonal BC, the impact it has on the body as it relates to the long-term healing and wellness of communities, and a way forward toward the collective liberation of people with uteruses.

## Implications of Hormonal Birth Control for Bodies Navigating Systemic and Generational Trauma

Ashi Arora and Haley Garcia

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*SoulFlow Healing, US*

Contraception has been instrumental to giving those with uteruses autonomy over their bodies and over whether or not to have children, thus advancing gender equity and justice. Hormonal birth control (BC) has also long been relied on in treating hormonal imbalance and irregular menses. However, the use of this form of contraception has many implications for the bodies of those with uteruses, especially for those who face chronic illnesses and have endured prolonged levels of stress and trauma. In working with people who have complex PTSD and have utilized hormonal BC, our clients' experiences have confirmed what has long been overlooked by the western medical system: the disruption of physiological endocrine systems and psychological health by this treatment. In many instances, clients were prescribed BC to treat symptoms of hormone imbalance such as acne and irregular menses, rather than the root causes such as high levels of stress and cortisol. Surveys of people's experiences with birth control are currently being collected. While on hormonal BC, clients have faced anxiety, depression, weight gain, and other symptoms. When clients stop using it, they have faced amenorrhea, hypothyroidism/hyperthyroidism, anxiety, depression, weight gain, immune-related symptoms, and ovarian cysts -- all symptoms of hormonal imbalance that existed prior to taking birth control or worsened. Therefore, for folks who have endured long periods of stress and trauma (cultural, systemic, and/or generational), their body's ability to heal is disrupted. It is important to understand the implications of birth control on people's bodies in the context of the relentless attacks on reproductive rights. This presentation will provide a deep dive into people's lived experiences with hormonal BC, the impact it has on the body as it relates to the long-term healing and wellness of communities, and a way forward toward the collective liberation of people with uteruses.



# Menstrual Materialities; An Ethnographic Study of Danish Menstrual Experiences and Bodily Understandings

Signe Banke

*University of Southern Denmark, Denmark*

This paper takes a new materialist perspective on menstrual experiences and builds on ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews with 15 women in Denmark. The aim of the paper is to understand what the menstrual materialities facing women are like and how these shape menstrual experiences and bodily understandings. The paper demonstrates how menstruation is insistently material; a slimy red-brown-ish, perhaps lumpy, substance flowing out and creeping up on everyday life in a society expecting exactly this uncontrollable material to be controlled. Menstrual products absorbing and collecting menstrual blood are used to this end, thus deeply entangled with what means to be menstruating (Kissling 2006). Drawing on new materialist scholars, this paper theorizes menstruation as a material event, understanding , the relationship between discourse and matter [in a way] that does not privilege the former to the exclusion of the latter, (Alaimo and Hekman 2008, 6). Taking materiality seriously is not only a matter of looking differently at the menstrual products so central to periods, but to acknowledge the thingness of humans too, the 'stuff' of the body, fleshy, biological, material body, (Valtonen and Närvänen 2022, 162) and the ways in which these human and non-human things are intertwined. As Valtonen and Närvänen (2022) point out , It is, after all, not always clear where the body begins and where it ends, (162) and this study finds the same to be true for the menstruating body, why menstruation is conceptualized as 'body-blood-product' entanglements, or what I theorize as menstrual materialities. Based on the findings, the paper unfolds the menstrual materialities making up everyday life with menstruation in Denmark and shows how these are key for understanding menstrual experiences and thus potentialities for improving menstrual well-being in the future.

## A Review of the Literature on Menstrual Attitudes and Self-Objectification

**Jessica Barnack-Tavlaris, Sabrina Sims, Ellie Kerhin, Bianca Torres, Rhea Peddinti and Emma Taff**

*The College of New Jersey, US*

Self-objectification (SO) and attitudes towards menstruation (ATM) have been studied due to the detrimental effects of SO on reproductive embodiment. Despite the fact that menstruation is a normal bodily process, it is still stigmatized, which results in negative ATM. In addition, many people who menstruate experience societal objectification of their bodies. Objectification Theory posits that women often look at/evaluate themselves through the male gaze, leading individuals to place more value on physical appearance rather than competence and personal characteristics (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997).

Researchers have identified a correlation between SO and negative ATM (e.g., Chrisler et al., 2015; Grose & Grabe, 2014; Roberts, 2004), but not necessarily while controlling for other variables, or with all measures of SO and ATM (e.g., Grose & Grabe, 2014; Johnston-Robledo, 2007; Milne & Barnack-Tavlaris, 2019). In this study we conducted a comprehensive and critical review of the literature on ATM and SO to develop a nuanced understanding of the relation between these variables. We identified strengths and limitations of the studies, including the samples' diversity. First, we created a list of search terms to identify empirical studies that measured ATM and SO: 15 articles met the criteria. Next, we coded information about the study samples and findings. Most studies demonstrate a significant relationship between SO and negative ATM; however, most were correlational and many did not control for potential third variables. Correlations were found between some but not all measures. There were several strengths of the studies including the use of standardized measures. Several study limitations were also found including the limited racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among the samples. An intersectional lens can help us develop a more enriched and nuanced understanding among diverse populations.

## Using the Power of Film and Participatory Research for Menstrual Policy Action in Nepal

Sara Baumann<sup>①</sup>, Sara Parker<sup>②</sup>, Madhusudan Subedi<sup>③</sup>, BK Shrestha<sup>④</sup>,  
Jyotika Rimal and Tatiana Matuszewski

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①University of Pittsburgh, US; ②Sara Parker, ③Liverpool John Moores University, UK; ④Patan Academy of Health Sciences, Nepal; ④Global Action Nepal

**Background:** Nearly 90% of women and girls in Nepal practice at least one menstrual restriction, which prevents them from fully participating in economic and social life, and negatively impacts health, school attendance, and employment. We applied Collaborative Filmmaking (CF) to study menstrual experiences, taboos, and stigma surrounding menstruation. CF, a visual, participatory research method, was used with 13 women in far-west Nepal to share their own experiences of menstrual taboos and solutions through film. In this study, we explored how community-created films can impact national- and district-level menstrual health decision making. To answer this question, we held film screenings for policymakers working on menstruation and gender issues in the capital and at the district headquarters where the CF study took place.

**Methods:** We conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with over 20 policy makers at the national and district levels after the film screenings. We also audio recorded the group discussions that took place. Quantitative data was analyzed in STATA and qualitative data was analyzed in NVivo.

**Results:** Policy makers at both levels appreciated the women's efforts in making their own films, and expressed that they can be powerful tools that can benefit various stakeholders when it comes to menstrual advocacy and education - from women themselves, to government representatives, religious leaders, and men in the community.

The policy makers expressed two key themes regarding the benefits of the films: 1) they are powerful for illustrating the ground reality, and 2) they can promote multi-sectoral decision making. Notably, engagement at the national vs district level screenings were considerably different; at the district level screening the women took on more of a leadership role and engaged with policy makers through action-oriented conversations.

**Implications:** Policy advocacy at the district level resulted in meaningful participant engagement and action-oriented discussion, which was greatly appreciated by the women filmmakers. Future policy-orientated advocacy efforts using film should seek to engage with leaders at the district level to bring about strategic change.

## More than one form of agency: Relinquishing and/or retaining menstrual practices in the Nepali diaspora in the United States

Ingrid Wenger, Sara Baumann<sup>①</sup>, Isabella Wegner, Katarina Schneiderman, Sanjana Murthy and Inga Winkler<sup>②</sup>

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<sup>①</sup>University of Pittsburgh, US; <sup>②</sup>Central European University, Hungry

Nine out of ten women in Nepal practice some form of menstrual restriction. These restrictions have been receiving significant attention in the media, advocacy groups, and scholarship—they are commonly presented as oppressive practices with a focus on sensationalized accounts of chhaupadi (menstrual seclusion). Two aspects get lost in these discussions: (1) The significant diversity in what and how women practice menstrual traditions, which vary by caste, ethnicity, geographical location, and age, and (2) how women themselves feel about these practices and whether there are parts they may value.

Our study turns to religious practices and beliefs in the diaspora, examining whether and how Nepali women continue to engage in their menstrual traditions after relocating to the United States. Based on 23 in-depth semi-structured interviews, we uncover complex dynamics and motivations in how women navigate their engagement with menstrual practices. We explore these dynamics in the context of religion, culture, tradition, and life in the diaspora seeking to understand how women exercise agency and what influences their decision-making.

We find that women's agency manifests in various forms. Some women felt freedom in discontinuing menstrual practices. Others, however, held onto the religious aspects of menstrual practices and considered these as part of their identity. The choices women made were informed by their religious values as well as the significance of community—the new environment in the United States, the diaspora community of other Nepalis, and family members in Nepal. For some, navigating these relationships resulted in adjusting when and how they would follow menstrual practices often making it dependent on the practice within a particular household and yielding to the expectations of maternal figures. These findings call for understanding the complexity of menstrual practices and recognizing the many ways in which women exercise agency in relinquishing and/or retaining their menstrual practices.

# Menstrual management among adolescent girls in Uttar Pradesh, India: An examination of interpersonal and mediated communication as delivery mechanisms for practical guidance

Suzanne Block, Michael Hauer, Alex Ezeh and Suruchi Sood

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*Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, US*

**Background:** Adolescent girls' right to achieve menstrual health and hygiene management (MHHM) healthfully is yet to be realized. One reason is the lack of practical guidance on the procurement, use, and disposal of menstrual products. This study defined interpersonal practical guidance (IPG) as face-to-face communication and mediated practical guidance (MPG) as print and media materials derived from social and behavior change communication (SBCC). We examine the impact of these two delivery mechanisms of practical guidance on adolescent MHHM knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) following an SBCC intervention in India.

**Objectives:** To understand how IPG and SBCC-driven MPG independently influence adolescent girls' KAP on the procurement, use, and disposal of menstrual products and whether those who receive both IPG and MPG have better KAP related to the procurement, use, and disposal of menstrual products than those who receive only one form of practical guidance or none at all.

**Methods:** Adolescent girls' questionnaire responses from GARIMA's case-comparison evaluation were analyzed using Stata/SE 17 ( $n= 2,384$ ). Girls were matched on sociodemographic and socioeconomic variables. Chi-square analysis examined relationships between sociodemographic, practical guidance, and KAP variables. Multivariate logistic regression assessed associations between practical guidance and KAP variables.

**Results:** There are significant associations between adolescent girls' KAP depending on whether they received IPG, SBCC-driven MPG, or both. IPG and MPG delivered together has greater odds of predicting correct menstrual management KAP than when delivered separately. These effects were most notable for adolescent girls' knowledge and practices related to using and disposing of menstrual hygiene products.

**Conclusion:** This study introduces an innovative approach that utilizes interpersonal and mediated communication as mechanisms to deliver practical guidance on menstrual management. Future interventions should implement and evaluate to better understand the role of practical guidance in ensuring all women and girls are prepared to confidently manage their menstrual health.

## Restoring the Menstrual Imagination

Amy Bobeda

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*Radical Anthropology Group, Naropa University, US*

The late poet Diane di Prima wrote 'the only war, is the war against the imagination', in her famed Revolutionary Letters – an anti-war, anti-police, anti-capitalist manifesto.



How might the war against the imagination affect our cultural conceptions, practices, and semiotics of menstruation? From a flattening of menstrual taboos as both sacred and profane to merely profane, language, images, and cultural perceptions of menstruation fall into an imaginal gutter of pollution, refuse, stigma, and shame so prohibiting, many choose to artificially pause their cycles. A disregard for the menstrual body develops into a disregard for the earth: fracking, oil drilling, and pollution reign in a society overrun by the bloodshed of gun violence and aggression in the streets and imagined worlds of video games, film, and television. Could we restore the menstrual imagination through creative practices, and individual and collective ritual acts? Are stories and symbols the key to restoring the balance of sacred and profane?

Through the emphasis on reframing and revitalizing menstrual metaphor, this process-based paper aims to help breathe life into the menstrual imagination from the images of Cecilia Vicuña's swaths of red unspun wool as the blood of the earth and the menstruator's body to a personal ritual art practice reframing red litter as a byproduct of menstrual disregard through art and poetry, returning to the overt and hidden symbolism of menstrual power in ancient poetics (The Descent of Inanna, The Wawilak Sisters) and modern fairytales to reveal the power of blood is all around us waiting to be called into action.

If as the poet Judy Gran says 'All blood is menstrual blood', can reviving the menstrual imagination liberate the menstruator and restore consciousness to create more cyclical, ecologically sound cultures that shed less senseless blood?

## Menstrual cycle in the professional context: multiple experiences and common concerns

Aline Boeuf

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University of Geneva, Switzerland

During a qualitative research, ten menstruated people, having a professional activity, in Geneva, Switzerland, were asked how they deal with menstrual cycle within their daily professional life and questioning what they think about a menstrual leave. The research consisted of two semi-structured interviews with each participant.

Literature focuses on menarche (first period), on teenagers and their menstruations during high school but we have very few contributions about menstruations in a professional context. The place of women in the work environment is well documented, questioned, and theorized but there is little information about menstrual cycle in the professional environment.

The participants of the research lived wide-ranging experiences in the work place and also in the course of their lives. These diverse experiences however yield common concerns: hiding the blood, dealing with work organization, and physical and psychological symptoms. Menstrual stigma and negative perceptions of femininity are also significant concerns.

About menstrual leave, participants stated that it would preserve the health and well-being of employees suffering from dysmenorrhea and free up the conversation around menstruation. However, they quickly expressed their concerns. They are afraid of individual backlash for those who would benefit from menstrual leave, but more particularly a collective backlash, with an increase in discrimination against women: discrimination in employment, wage discrimination. They fear that menstrual leave will become a form of social marker affecting all women, whether or not they use this measure.

This fear demonstrates the fragility of the achievements for women in the professional sphere. Women employees do not have the opportunity to care about their own health and well-being. Acknowledging the existence of the menstrual cycle and being aware of the similarities and diversities of menstrual cycles is a necessary step in the professional world to achieve complete equity.

## Bloody War - A Review of the Existing Literature on the Association between Conflict and Menstruation in Refugee Women and Girls

Devina Buckshee

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*Yale University, US*

Women's health needs, in particular their sexual and reproductive health needs, are often neglected in conflict settings. While there is growing evidence on maternal and infant mortality in fragile settings, aspects of reproductive health like menstruation remain less studied. This paper aims to contribute to the literature by synthesizing the most recent evidence on conflict and menstrual health outcomes.

In particular, the call to action is the need for more research and more specific, evidence-based interventions on conflict-affected people's menstrual health, including but not limited to irregularities, mental health support, pain diagnoses in humanitarian settings. In this paper, I have conducted a systematic review of the literature on menstruation and conflict to understand the association between the exposure and outcome. The results indicate that there is scope for future research on the interaction between trauma, malnutrition and menstrual health in vulnerable populations, and a need to include menstruating people's narratives in the studies conducted. The papers all included varied pathways from conflict to menstrual health issues (stress, violence, nutrition) and more specific research on this population would be incredibly helpful in designing aid interventions, especially on menstrual hygiene management, mental health and sexual and reproductive health support in conflict-affected areas. As demonstrated in this paper, the menstrual health needs of displaced adolescents and women in humanitarian crises need our urgent attention.



# The fear of leaking: The life and work of models menstruating on the job

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Aripta Sinha

*Washington State University, United States*

The fashion industry holds the model's body to immutable standards. Even the smallest fluctuations during menstruation- bloating, dermatological issues, or other bodily changes can possibly cause models to lose their job. This is exacerbated by the stigma around menstruation which encourages a culture of silence, secrecy, and shame, stopping models from organizing work around their menstrual cycle. Additionally, menstruating on the job can have significant physical impact on the models (starting from fatigue and aches while performing physically demanding tasks in high heels to Toxic Shock Syndrome from inability to change tampons due to lack of access to restrooms) due to the demanding nature of the job and a workplace that is hostile by design. The fashion industry has, therefore, failed to care about or accommodate the health needs of one of its primary worker demographics, the female models, who anyway work as precarious workers. This negligence on the industry's part, which threatens the health and well-being, as well as the labor rights of models, makes menstruation a deeply political issue in need of urgent scrutiny.

In this paper I use ethnographic data collected in India to cover aspects like the effects of changes in physical appearance, medication and pain management, menstrual hygiene, and special precautions like leakage prevention on the job. Combining Anthropology of the Body, Anthropology of Work, and Critical Menstruation Studies, I critically analyze the experiences and perceptions of menstruating models and investigate how they navigate workplace demands while on their menstrual cycle. This lets us ascertain what impact menstruating on the job has on the models' work and health and how the workplace poses further health risks to them. Finally, this brings attention to the need for more inclusive and supportive working conditions for models, particularly regarding the management of menstrual cycles and related health issues.

## (Re)Negotiating the menstruating bodies in the climate action framework

Aysha Farhana Chakkampully

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*Charles University, Czech Republic*

The bodies of the global poor are a vessel for the western imagination of the exotica and something to feel good about themselves. These feel-good bodies are further evaluated and taught the permissible ways of living. They fundamentally receive half-baked knowledge about their existence as a consciously created subject that embodies otherness and a lack of self-awareness. The co-existence of the subject status and an objectified self or menstrual dualism is visible in the current knowledge systems. For instance, disposable sanitary napkins were advertised as early as 1885 in India. It was a created need in the first place, a class object aimed at upper-class consumers, or ladies as they called, and in 138 years have been made affordable to a little lower to the middle class.



Even before it dripped down to the lowest of masses for managing menstruation (popularized by NGOs and other actors), there is a global outrage against disposable sanitary napkins as a menace to society. As true as they are, the ongoing interventions in menstrual management in the global poor areas have suddenly started to switch and abandon their projects mid-way expecting their subjects to embrace the same. It is important to trace the creation of menstrual management (as we see it today) as a constructed need and the new mid-way adoption of body linkages to climate action as a menstruating robot.

As the producers of such products are not called out or made accountable, the end consumers share the burden of a newly created eco-consciousness in the period-poverty-stricken areas. In the wake of a global climate emergency, the changing patterns of gendered eco-social relations are to be re-examined and negotiated in the global climate action framework that throws the unshared burden of the technological invasions from the global rich countries and capitalism.

The paper aims to introduce the Body for Existence (BfE) concept in climate action and analyses the viability of sustainable menstruation as an agenda for the near future and the shortcomings of the current model. BfE concept advocates for new actors and design in the dissemination of the menstrual knowledge systems. The paper evaluates the need, meanings, and politics of convenient abandonment in menstruation during the emerging climate policies.

## Technology and the menstrual bias; stolen wombs of the working-class women of the 21st century

Aysha Farhana Chakkampully

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Charles University, Czech Republic

Women produce half of the world's food in the developing world as non-independent farmers. The current developmental model of farming endorse an increase in the number of women in multiple farm roles that impact paid outdoor labor and unpaid home-bound labor. An increasing number of women in agriculture must have adequate policies that protect them from the exploitation of capital due to their social status. From the perspective of a third-world woman, productivity is a measure of producing life and holds a central position in survival. In such an instance, the women sugarcane cutters of Beed, one of the poorest districts of the Maharashtra state in India are reportedly uterus-less for recent years as much as one in every three having their wombs removed. These contractual-migrant workers are an unorganized class of seasonal laborers who are often met with reluctance from contractors in hiring menstruating women. Menstruation is a menace to productive work in the fields. Workers who miss a day or just part of a day due to periods are penalized. Fearing this, women are undergoing mass hysterectomies and invasive surgeries in the area. They are married young in the village resulting in early childbirth and left with a 'useless uterus'. The implementation of invasive surgeries and biotechniques to ensure maximum work availability of women in unorganized sectors like farming is on the rise.



The paper analyses the menstrual bias between the capitalist working-class women with paid maternity leave and period leaves and the lower-class working women of the 21st century with stolen wombs and highlights the importance of intersectional working-class feminism during the capitalist invasions of feminism at large.

## Building a Period-Friendly Campus: An Inter-Organizational Approach

Zoe Chan<sup>①</sup>, Amy<sup>②</sup>, Ho Lam (Roland) Cheng<sup>③</sup>

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<sup>①</sup>Happeriod; <sup>②</sup>The Association for the Advancement of Feminism; <sup>③</sup>Saan Sing Sex and Gender Concern Group

Period poverty remains a topic that is, if not neglected, rarely discussed in the public sphere of Hong Kong due to inadequate sex education and associated stigma. Meanwhile, spatial design of university campuses fails to make menstrual products accessible at all times.

University campuses often lack accessible menstrual products and fail to address the needs of female students and staff. To address these challenges, three local organizations (Happeriod, The Association for the Advancement of Feminism, and Saan Sing Sex and Gender Concern Group) have joined forces to implement the "DropSpot - Support Station for Menstruation" scheme in a Hong Kong university during the 4th quarter of 2022.

The scheme includes:

1. Providing menstrual products in 12 designated female toilets;
2. Organizing workshops on period cultures and body autonomy;
3. Collecting feedback through questionnaires to understand the needs of female students and staff members.

This project aims to demonstrate the feasibility of creating a period-friendly campus that accommodates menstrual needs through improved spatial design and facility provision, as well as promoting a positive, stigma-free atmosphere for discussing period-related issues in public. The project also serves as a demonstration to local institutions which they can adopt easily, as well as forges cooperation and solidarity among organizations or advocacy groups that endeavor to work on gender/sexuality equity and inclusiveness of the city.

## More than Menstrual Equality: towards Menstrual Abundance

Yuan-Yi Chen and Wen-Fei Shih

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GoMoond®, Artemis Medical Services, Taiwan

The rapid growth of menstrual product innovation and public acceptance in Taiwan leads the society toward the future of 'menstrual abundance'. The following will highlight the role of business, policy, and culture in driving change.

Taiwan has seen a rapid growth in the market for various new types of menstrual products in the past 12 years, including menstrual cups, period underwear, buttonless cloth pads, menstrual discs, and period workout pants.



This shift in the market has not only changed users' habits and perception of menstruation, but has also led to a positive shift in the way people view their menstruation. The success of the menstrual product industry in Taiwan is driven by ordinary Taiwanese people who have become entrepreneurs out of their enthusiasm for these products, rather than multinational corporations.

From a policy perspective, Taiwan has classified menstrual cups and tampons as medical devices. In 2016, there were over 6,000 citizens who signed a petition to pass legislation to allow for the online sale of menstrual cups. In 2022, the Legislative Yuan passed a proposal requiring the Ministry of Education to start in 2023. Class-level schools distribute "diversified" menstrual products for free. Which means not only pads, but also including other types of menstrual products.

From a cultural perspective, the publication and speed of menstruation-themed books have increased. In addition to translated books, records of the development of modern menstrual products in Taiwan and original manga on menstruation education in Taiwan have also been published.

On World Menstrual Day in 2021, The first menstrual carnival in Asia was held in Taiwan, attracting over 2,000 people in 3 days. Starting from the context of art creation, interactive games, and the development history of Taiwan's menstrual products, it will reverse the public's perception of menstruation.

## Comic, plush costumes and role play: leading teenagers to learn about menstruation from scratch

Yuan-Yi Chen

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GoMoond®, Artemis Medical Services, Taiwan

A Taiwanese original menstrual education comic book "Lucky Womb - Come to the uterus! A beginner's guide to menstruation in puberty: Starting from scratch and getting along with menstruation." brings a diverse perspective on menstruation to the next generation of teenagers. The book uses lively, peaceful, curious, and timid characters to showcase various perspectives to menstruation. It encourages teenagers to reflect on their feelings towards menstruation and their bodies, realizing that everybody is unique and everyone's body is also remarkable.

The book also creates a series of body organ characters such as the Uterus Queen (Build a magnificent palace every month and demolish it when no fertilized eggs live in), Genital Penguin (Transform the clitoris shape into a penguin with vulva on its stomach, and get a unique fur coat when it grows up: the appearance of the vulva in adulthood), Ovary Nurturer, and Flexible Vagina etc., showing the functions of the reproductive system in an interesting way.

With the mindset of gender equality perspective, the book doesn't overlink menstruation with femininity, making the menstrual mechanism returning to the functional changes in body growth rather than defining identity or gender frameworks to biological females. So that trans people don't feel excluded when reading.

To attract children's attention, the Genital Penguin character was made into a plush costume and appeared at menstrual theme exhibitions in Taipei and Kaohsiung, where many families go out on weekends.

Many children happily ran over to embrace the penguin, and parents explained the vaginal opening, urethral opening, and labia on the penguin's belly.

Additionally, at events such as comic festivals and international book fairs in Taiwan, characters such as the Uterus Queen were presented in a human form through cosplay, enhancing the sense of identity among teenagers and fans of anime.

Starting from a menstrual education book, "Lucky Womb" also spawned teaching plans designed for middle and elementary school teachers, teenage menstrual education workshops, children's summer camp activities, and a nationwide seed lecturer project. Through a crowd-funding project, this book has also reached about half of the elementary school libraries in Taiwan, allowing children who have doubts about menstruation during their growth process to see this book in school and establish a diverse and equal view of menstruation.

## Menstrual activism in Chile: A feminist analysis for positioning menstruation as a social and political issue

Sofía Cifuentes

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*Universidad de Santiago de Chile*

The objective of this research is to identify and analyze, from a critical feminist perspective, the discourses of activists, collectives and civil society organizations that challenge menstrual taboo and stigma and seek to re-signify menstruation as a political and social issue in Chile.

This paper proposal is the result of research done for my master thesis in social sciences, about the incipient menstrual activism that is happening in Chile. This activism emerges in the context of recent social demands, such as feminism , going mainstream, (2018), social uprising (2019), the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing Constitutional process. Local menstrual activism dialogues with these events and with what is happening in this regard in other Latin American countries.

Understating social discourses (Angenot, 2010) as part of the agonistics of social and political life (Mouffe, 2014) and in line with the conceptualization of , radical feminism, and , spiritual feminism, in the menstrual activism of the US (Bobel, 2010), this research aims to understand the presences (and absences) of different feminist perspectives in the local menstrual movement, were proposals for the decolonization of menstruation, for example, coexist with advocacy for the bill on menstruators right's.

This research is an empirical qualitative study approved by the Ethics Committee of Universidad de Santiago de Chile. A total of thirteen interviews with the participation of seventeen women were conducted: three with menstrual activists, four with collectives and six with civil society organizations. All explicitly address menstruation and work in the Metropolitan and/or in the Valparaíso region. The guidelines for feminist research (Harding, 1998) have been implemented and data analyses followed grounded theory procedures and content analysis. Preliminary results shows different feminist perspectives on the need for claiming menstruation as a feminist issue, gender reifications and questionings and menstruation as a complex issue that has been invisible for too long.

# The importance of advocates in policy development processes for menstrual health: A case study of the Kenyan Menstrual Hygiene Management Policy and Strategy

**Sophie Collins, Hayley MacGregor, Maya Unnithan**

*Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK*

This presentation focuses on the importance of advocates in policy development processes for menstrual health through the example of the Kenyan Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Policy and Strategy 2019-2030. The advocates in this presentation are individuals or groups within government, as well as NGOs, social enterprises, and individuals who worked on the Policy.

The intention is to recognize the various elements that go into the development of a menstrual health policy, which can be beneficial, but also highlights some limitations of the process, and to open a wider discussion on how menstrual health is framed in policy.

The information in this presentation was collected through ten-months PhD fieldwork research in Kenya between January-October 2022. The data was collected through over thirty interviews with those involved in the creation of the Kenyan MHM Policy and Strategy, including representatives from the Ministry of Health, Department of Gender, academics, social enterprises, and NGOs. Data was also collected through informal conversations, spending time with two menstrual health organizations, and reviewing policy documentation.

Kenya is the first country to have a dedicated menstrual health policy and strategy, however it is yet to be fully implemented. This presentation covers elements of the policy development process focusing on the actors, which departments the policy sits in, the effects of policy funding, and how the act of policy development is a political process. This research found that key advocates, both within and external to government, were instrumental in the development and subsequent publishing of the policy.

Initial reflections on the implications of diverse perspectives from actors suggest that while steps have been taken towards making the language and scope of the MHM Policy and Strategy inclusive and accessible, conflicting or competing agendas and the availability of financial, physical, and human resources resulted in limitations.

## Young People's Experiences of Menstrual Injustice in South Australia

**Helen Connolly**

*Commission for Children and Young People, South Australian Government,  
Australia*

As the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People I hear from thousands of children and young people about their hopes, interests and concerns. In 2020 I surveyed South Australian high schools and young people to find out more about the experiences of those who menstruate and how schools support them. In 2021 and 2022 I have spoken to young people in sport about the impact of menstruation and how their clubs support them.



The findings have been very disappointing from a gendered, human rights, and social justice perspective. Exclusion: Lack of access to period products is a significant issue affecting children and young people who menstruate – the vast majority of whom are female. It impacts their engagement in education, social activities, and sport. This is particularly problematic for those who can't afford period products. Shaming: Young people who menstruate are made to feel embarrassed or ashamed about their periods. Open conversation about periods is frequently frowned upon at school, at home, and as part of activities such as sport.

- What needs to change:
- ·Normalise the conversation
- Educate and raise awareness
- Provide free products and adequate facilities.

## What We Talk About When We Talk About Decolonial Menstrual Health: perspectives to emancipate the menstrual health, Latin American experiences

**Laura Contreras-Aristizábal**

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*Medicina de Mujer, Colombia*

This paper wants to present the results obtained in the research that aimed to investigate the meanings that women attribute to Menstrual Health and explore from where they build those meanings. The foregoing is based on recognizing that menstruation, in addition to being a biological process, has cultural, social, political and economic implications. However, the predominant approach that has been made on Menstrual Health has been mostly from biomedical knowledge that addresses menstruation as a physiological process limited to reproduction. In contrast, the women who participated in the research give a meaning to Menstrual Health that decolonizes what they have learned about menstruation and becomes a process that empowers them. Through critical ethnography, we sought to investigate what it meant for them to talk about Menstrual Health and found the importance they attribute to the practices of self-knowledge of the menstrual cycle and self-management of health and how these promote a relationship with their menstruation and their body, different from conventional gynecological knowledge.

The research was oriented from a decolonial feminist approach. I complemented the practical exercise with a process of personal reflection from my menstrual experience and the work I have done with women, from therapeutic exercises, different meetings for collective reflection around Health and Menstrual Activism. In conclusion, the reflections recognize the process of menstruating as a political act, in addition, they give a meaning to Menstrual Health that recognizes the importance of decolonizing our bodies from hegemonic knowledge. It was found that self-knowledge of the menstrual cycle and health self-management practices promote body sovereignty, thanks to the conscious and exploratory relationship of the menstrual experience. It is proposed to understand menstrual health from an emancipatory perspective according to Latin American needs.

# Reflections, dialogues of knowledge and self-management of health through access to information in Menstrual Sexual and Reproductive Health with women deprived of liberty

**Laura Contreras-Aristizábal**

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*Medicina de Mujer, Colombia*

Cíclicas is a process of accompaniment to women who are in prison through workshops and activities to socialize tools to manage Menstrual Health in conditions of deprivation of liberty. Since 2019 Cíclicas has worked in two prisons in Bogotá-Colombia: El Buen Pastor Women's Prison and the District Prison.

The main objective is the promotion of self-care practices through workshops that addressed issues around menstrual, sexual, and reproductive health, with tools for managing physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health.

Currently, two booklets of the work carried out have been produced: Cíclicas (2020) and Cíclicas 2 (2022), thus being a collective construction between the attendees of the workshops and the workshop leaders because we start from the fact that we all have knowledge. By promoting reflections on experiences, collective knowledge can be built. Thus, the booklets have been a didactic resource to promote and self-manage menstrual health within prisons, as well as show how to address these issues with women deprived of liberty.

This work has been carried out thanks to the alliance between two Colombian organizations: The Pazósfera Corporation and Medicina de Mujer.

## Limitations of Current Menstrual Equity Advocacy and a Path Towards Justice

**Allyson Crays**

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*Northeastern University School of Law, US*

Since 2015, legal strategies to end period poverty and achieve menstrual equity have increased dramatically across the United States. Current advocacy for menstrual equity is concentrated in three main areas: litigation based on sex discrimination claims, legislation to end additional taxes on menstrual products, and legislation to increase access to menstrual products in schools. This article outlines and analyzes the history of menstrual equity activism in litigation and legislative initiatives to understand the progress that advocates have achieved. This article then argues that the framework of sex discrimination limits current menstrual equity legal strategies and, therefore, should adopt a reproductive justice lens to meet the needs of the most marginalized menstruators. Lastly, this article argues that to advocate for true menstrual justice, advocates should shift their attention and resources to administrative and policy changes that would work to eliminate period poverty for the people most in need, such as low-income, unhoused, and incarcerated menstruators.



# Lived Experiences of Menstrual Hygiene Management among Transgender and Non-Binary Populations in Urban India: A Qualitative Approach

Priyanka Dubey<sup>①</sup>, Muthusamy Sivakami<sup>②</sup>, Shannon Lea Watkins<sup>①</sup>, Kelly Baker<sup>①</sup>, William Story<sup>①</sup> and Rima Afifi<sup>①</sup>

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**Significance:** Most research on menstrual hygiene management (MHM) remains focused on women and girls, with limited evidence on how transgender and non-binary (TNB) persons manage their menstruation. This research aims to document the lived experiences of menstrual management among TNB people in urban India.

**Methods:** Using a qualitative approach, we conducted 13 semi-structured telephonic interviews with TNB adults aged 19-40 years, in three major Indian metropolitan cities, with the help of trusted community organizations. Eleven participants identified as trans-male, one non-binary, and one intersex. Participants were asked to share their experiences of managing their menstruation in multiple spaces of life, such as at home, school, workplace, and other public spaces. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, de-identified, and cleaned. We developed a codebook using an iterative process starting with the interview guide and adding new codes that arose based on the transcripts. We applied thematic analysis to the transcripts.

**Preliminary results:** Three major themes have emerged. 'Gender dysphoria' is common among participants. Though many reported undergoing hormonal replacement therapy to suppress menstruation, they continued experiencing menstrual symptoms, triggering dysphoria. Another common theme was 'the influence of place on MHM'. Managing physical aspects of menstruation is less challenging in familiar, private surroundings, and accessing public spaces and bathrooms remains a major challenge and stressor. Participants who work in a non-office setting reported taking leave for a few days of the symptomatic menstrual cycle to control this stress. A theme of 'knowledge and norms around menarche' is significant for although not specific to TNB persons. Participants reported a lack of knowledge about menstruation prior to menarche; and while social norms differed across the country, all participants experienced confusion, shame, and dysphoria at menarche.

**Discussion:** Documenting lived experiences of MHM among TNB people supports the effort to 'de-gender' menstruation. Magnifying the voices and lived experienced of TNB people can bolster the development of effective interventions to enhance their wellbeing."



# Menstrual hygiene management among transgender and non-binary populations: A global systematic review

Priyanka Dubey, Libby Fry<sup>①</sup>; Abinaya Ilavarasan<sup>①</sup>; Muthusamy Sivakami<sup>②</sup>; Kelly Baker<sup>①</sup>; William Story<sup>①</sup>; Shannon Lea Watkins<sup>①</sup>; Rima Afifi<sup>①</sup>

<sup>①</sup>College of Public Health, University of Iowa, US;

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**Significance:** Transgender and non-binary (TNB) persons having to navigate menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in a social context where their gender may not be recognized and may increase challenges in accessing MHM resources. This study aims to systematically review and synthesize the current global literature on MHM among TNB populations and identify future research needs.

**Methods:** We conducted a systematic review of global quantitative and qualitative studies of lived experiences of MHM among TNB populations. We searched six databases for peer-reviewed literature, published in English up to April 2022. We used Covidence to screen eligible titles and abstracts, and at least two reviewers reviewed each title/ abstract and full-text record. We then extracted, coded, and analyzed the results of included papers.

**Preliminary results:** The search strategy yielded 3651 records, of which 28 studies met the inclusion criteria. Fifteen of these studies used quantitative methods, and almost all studies were based in the global north. Twenty-two studies were conducted in the last three years. Studies described menstruation as a source of gender dysphoria. Amenorrhea, the absence of menstruation, is a welcome relief. Quantitative studies focused on various contraception and hormonal therapy options to achieve amenorrhea, whereas qualitative studies focused on the MHM's physical, emotional, and environmental aspects. 'Othering' of the TNB population in all aspects of MHM, including the idea of menstruation associated with women alone, accessibility of public bathrooms, and availability of menstrual products, was highlighted across several studies. A need for comprehensive guidelines on menstruation-related and overall reproductive health care for TNB persons, gender-inclusive menstrual products, and resources was emphasized across many studies.

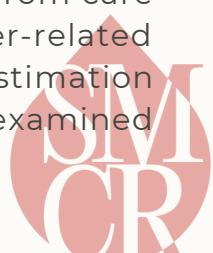
**Discussion:** This systematic review highlighted several challenges and unique needs for MHM vocalized by TNB populations, as well as an urgent need for more research to guide intervention and policy development.

## Patient-Provider Dynamics Around Menstruation-Related Concerns

Rachel A Fikslin and Ellie Seohyun Lee

Seton Hall University, US

**Background:** Menstruating cisgender women experience a range of physical and emotional experiences related to their menstrual cycles and may benefit from care from health care providers. Despite evidence that there are provider-related barriers to seeking support (e.g., patient concerns about provider underestimation of pain; Ramos-Pichardo et al., 2020), there is little research that has examined patient-provider dynamics related to menstruation.



Considering the importance of high-quality provider care around menstruation, we conducted a mixed-methods study to better understand women's disclosure of menstruation-related concerns to health care providers and their experiences of subsequent patient-provider interactions.

**Method:** In a survey of 263 cisgender women in the U.S., we asked about the frequency of different menstruation-related concerns (i.e., pain, mood-related symptoms, heavy bleeding, irregular bleeding), how often women told their providers about those concerns, how satisfied they were with the care provided, and what their experiences were like.

**Results:** Of those who reported experiencing irregular bleeding, 40.5% reported having ever told a provider, compared to 39.7% of those with menstruation-related pain, 25.7% of those with heavy bleeding, and 17.1% of those with mood-related symptoms. Most participants reported moderate or high satisfaction with their patient-provider conversations about menstruation. In order to understand both positive and negative experiences, we conducted thematic analysis of qualitative responses to a question about why participants chose their satisfaction ratings.

Several key themes emerged as reasons for patient (dis)satisfaction, including pain being dismissed or normalized, differential attitudes about birth control as treatment, and shared agency in health decision-making.

**Implications:** The present study offers information about menstruators' experiences talking to providers about menstruation-related concerns, including how these interactions are shaped by menstrual stigma and the medicalization of menstruation. This research has the potential to inform efforts to enhance the provision of patient-centered menstrual care.

## Commercialization of menstrual hygiene in the Nordics: Business history explaining access to disposable menstrual products in Post WW II Finland, Sweden, and Norway

Matleena Frisk

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*University of Helsinki, Finland*

This presentation concentrates on business history and trade politics to widen the understanding of differences in everyday life of the menstruators between three Nordic countries, Finland, Sweden and Norway. My ongoing research suggests that disposable menstrual pads were less accessible in post-war Finland than in Norway and Sweden. In Finland, disposable menstrual pads only became widely affordable and broadly available in the late 1950s and during the 1960s. In Sweden, the wealthiest and least affected by the war of all the three countries, disposable pads were common already in the 1940s. Interestingly, also in Norway pads seem to have been accessible earlier than in Finland. All these neighboring countries had significant paper converting industry and companies producing cotton and cellulose cotton pads by the time of World War II. My preliminary results suggest that the differences not only reflect differences in purchasing power, but also the industry's capacity to invest in the post-war reconstruction period, and are an incidental result of the protection of domestic industry.

The specific circumstances of the individual companies operating in the respective countries, as well as foreign trade and its regulation, resulted in menstrual inequality between the three countries. I utilize a variety of sources: industry archives, statistics, advertising, and magazine articles on the products and their use. The presentation is part of my Academy of Finland project on increasing use of short lifespan and disposable products revolutionizing everyday practices in Finland 1939, 1994.

## Hormonal Health: Promises and Pitfalls of Arranging One's Life Around Hormone Cycles

**Andrea Ford**

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*University of Edinburgh, Scotland*

Period tracking is an increasingly widespread practice, and its emphasis is changing from monitoring fertility to encompassing a more broad-based picture of users' health. Delving into the data of one's menstrual cycle, and the hormones that are presumed to be intimately linked with it, is a practice that is reshaping ideas about health and wellness, while also shaping subjects and subjectivities that succeed under conditions of surveillance capitalism. Based on a set of qualitative interviews and participatory design work, this presentation elaborates the potential implications period tracking and related 'FemTech' innovations. In sidestepping fertility, this way of using such tech participates in the 'queering' of menstrual technologies, while integrating institutional medical expertise and quotidian embodied experience within a broader approach to the self as a management project. Complex techniques of period-related self-management include monitoring, hypothesizing, intervening in medical appointments, adjusting schedules, and interpreting social interactions. Such techniques empower their proponents, but not within conditions of their choosing. I use the concept of 'hormonal health' to describe a way of caring for, and knowing about, bodies, one that weaves together mental and physical health, correlates subjective and objective information, and calls into question the boundary between illness and wellness. This view of health has profound potential to challenge misogynistic and increasingly outdated health systems, yet is being enacted in a context of surveillance capitalism that raises pressing concerns about data privacy, profit, individualized solutions, and the internalization of social pressures.

## Our Bodies Ourselves Today and Menstrual Education

**Saniya Ghanoui**

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*Suffolk University; Our Bodies Ourselves Today, US*

When the original Our Bodies, Ourselves book came out in the early 1970s, many people gravitated to the discussions of abortion (then illegal in the U.S.) and birth control. But the book's honest, clear, and feminist perspective on the menstrual cycle—from menarche to menopause—propelled it to become a commonly used resource for menstruators or soon-to-be menstruators who had questions about their bodies and cycles. Now, as Program Director of Our Bodies Ourselves Today, the new digital platform that provides accurate, up-to-date, and evidence-based resources, I have worked to build a team of Menstruation through Menopause Content Experts who curate, vet, and approve resources for the website.



In this presentation, I will analyze how Our Bodies Ourselves Today put together its team of Content Experts, the continued need to share feminist resources about the menstrual cycle, how menstrual education has become a critical form of activism, and the challenges we have encountered conducting menstrual education and menstrual activism in a digital space.

## Exploring Menstrual Traditions through Collaborative Filmmaking and Songwriting with Mothers and Grandmothers in Far-west Nepal

Korrina Gidwani<sup>①</sup>, Sushma Bhatta<sup>①</sup>, Laxmi Dhital<sup>①</sup>, Sara E Baumann<sup>①</sup>,  
Sara Parker<sup>②</sup>, Katarina Schneiderman

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<sup>①</sup>University of Pittsburgh, US; <sup>②</sup>Liverpool John Moores University, UK

**Background:** Though menstruation is a natural physiological process, social and cultural contexts within which women experience it significantly impacts their overall well-being. A previous study using Collaborative Filmmaking with adolescent girls in far-west Nepal revealed a range of menstrual practices that differ by caste/ethnicity and religion. This study directly builds upon those findings to further explore menstrual practices and motivations from the perspectives of different generations: the mothers and grandmothers living in the same village, who are often key influencers of menstrual traditions for their daughters and granddaughters. The primary purpose of the research was to develop a depth of understanding through creative storytelling and songwriting from women themselves, making the women filmmakers in this study true partners in this work.

**Methods:** Using Collaborative Filmmaking (CF), a participatory visual research method, we engaged 13 women in Kanchanpur district in far-west Nepal in an arts-based study of menstruation. Over the course of 2 years, and following the six steps of CF, the women were trained in filmmaking, provided equipment to create their own films, co-analyzed the films with the research team, and screened their films in the community. The project resulted in two films produced and directed by the women, a drama and a documentary. All data were analyzed in NVivo using grounded theory to identify key themes.

**Results:** We identified a shift in menstrual practices over time, in which women expressed their menstrual practices have improved from previous conditions. Some mothers' and grandmothers' also expressed that it was critical for them to avoid perpetuating their experiences to the next generation. Some practices and views, however, remained constant; all women consistently avoided temples until the 5th day of menstruation and restored their purity with cow urine. These traditions were passed down through generations, but recent societal changes have led to significant alterations - and in some cases, complete cessations - in menstrual practices.

**Implications:** By engaging in Collaborative Filmmaking, the women were able to harness creativity and a range of storytelling styles to express their views and experiences of menstruation. The approach may be applicable to investigating several other health issues, by offering creative tools for long term participant engagement and interaction with the research topic.

# Gazing at the sexualised menstruator: Menstrual stigma, sexuality and desire in *I Love Dick* and *I May Destroy You*

Bridgette Glover

*University of New England, Australia*

Film and television have contributed significantly to the concept of menstrual stigma by repeatedly portraying menstruation as an embarrassing, unruly and/or traumatic experience. Since 2015, however, following a boom in menstrual visibility across media platforms and popular culture, there has been an increased diversity in screen media depictions of experiences of menstruation. This paper explores the history of screen media's problematic representation of the sexualized menstruator, traditionally driven by the male gaze, and considers how these recent changes in screen narratives about menstruation respond to, and are influenced by, the rise in menstrual activism and awareness. This development is illustrated through close analysis of two sex scenes from Joey Soloway's *I Love Dick* (Amazon Prime Video, 2016-2017) and Michaela Coel's *I May Destroy You* (BBC One and HBO, 2020). By incorporating elements of abjection, disgust and desire in their respective sequences, both television series offer nuanced depictions of the experiences of the sexualized menstruator. In response to Soloway's own industry-based theorization of the 'female gaze' (2016), this paper examines the issue of gazing at the sexualized menstruator through a gendered lens and identifies, through its analysis of the two sex scenes, an engagement with a 'feminist gaze' (Creed, 2022). This paper argues that post-2015 portrayals of the sexualized menstruator, like those seen in *I Love Dick* and *I May Destroy You*, are contributing to a larger cultural reframing of menstruation that shifts away from narratives of shame and concealment towards stories of inclusive, embodied resistance.

## They seem to only know about bleeding and cramps: Understanding menstruation experiences in sport and the coach- athlete relationship

Anna Goorevich<sup>①</sup> and Sarah Zipp<sup>②</sup>

<sup>①</sup>*University of Minnesota, US; ②Mount St. Mary's University, US*

Understanding the embodied experiences of menstruation is critical to knowledge-building in menstrual cycle research (Roberts, 2020). Although research in sport studies examines experiences of the body, studies on menstruation are conspicuously absent or lacking (Brunivels et al., 2016; Zipp et al., 2022). The limited research available has highlighted how stigma, lack of education, and a culture of hegemonic masculinity marginalize menstruating bodies, silences athletes, and creates barriers for participation and success (Women in Sport, 2022). Yet little is known on how coaches, especially at non-elite levels, can support menstruating athletes. This study provides a qualitative and quantitative examination of athletes' perceived barriers and facilitators to positive coach-athlete relationships around menstruation. Nearly 500 women-identifying athletes, aged 16 years or older from across the globe, completed an online survey.



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## Endometriosis: Pain, Politics, Public Health & the Power of Patients

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Heather C Guidone

*Center for Endometriosis Care, US*

Endometriosis is a systemic, inflammatory disease characterized by the presence of endometrial-like tissue found in varied locations of the body. Affecting approximately 190 million women, girls and gender-diverse individuals globally, the disease can result in a multitude of systemic issues ranging from chronic pain and inflammation to organ dysfunction and more. Endometriosis has the capacity to negatively impact daily life, education, career, relationships, and sexual, physical, and mental health. Awareness remains poor throughout the public and healthcare professions alike; as a result, patient frustration, substantial diagnostic delays, and poor information systems continue to impact research, diagnosis, and equal access to quality care.

Though often mistakenly perceived as 'painful periods', endometriosis goes far beyond the pelvis and its impact is not limited to merely 'menstrual difficulties and infertility among middle-aged women'. The disease is frequently diagnosed in teens and adolescents, and can be found in non-menstruators, those without a uterus i.e., post-hysterectomy, among post-menopausal individuals, and even in rare cis males and at fetal autopsy. Association with various co-morbidities is common, with increased rates and risks of certain gynepathologies, select autoimmune conditions, fibromyalgia, coronary heart disease, stroke, some cancers, adverse obstetrical outcomes, and more found among those with the disease.

Endometriosis remains fraught by formidable, unmet gaps and challenges, with many clinicians and society at large unaware of its potentially damaging effects on quality of life, sexual function and general welfare. Yet data from all major countries demonstrates that endometriosis is a costlier public health problem than more familiar conditions like migraines and Crohn's and is on par with public health burdens such as Type II Diabetes and Rheumatoid Arthritis. Current estimates for the direct and indirect costs i.e., surgery, prescriptions, productivity loss, work and school absenteeism/presenteeism and more are staggering, estimated at nearly \$70 billion annually in just the United States alone. Affecting predominantly those assigned female at birth, endometriosis also remains a poorly funded research area, as with other female-dominant diseases.

In an effort to address the multitude of barriers that have long resulted in lack of access to timely, multidisciplinary care for all, to increase research funding, and to develop better disease-related policies, it is largely patients across the international endometriosis community who have historically driven requisite changes. Through the lens of a three-decade professional endometriosis educator, activist, and advocate, this session will review how patient efforts have evolved to position the disease as a priority public health platform. I will review notable collaborations with likeminded political, clinician, research, and policy advocates who have joined efforts over time to achieve strides in the ways the disease is diagnosed, researched, and treated. Upon conclusion, attendees will be able to:

- Classify endometriosis as a tremendous public health burden and articulate goals towards developing and improving upon existing programs and policies to address persistent disparities and increase funding appropriations; and
- Evaluate the collaborative process of 'breaking the silence' to reposition the 'illness experience' narrative to that of an 'illness activist'.

## Menstrual Practices among Hindu Families of Western Nepal: Normative Versus Contemporary Practices

**Rajya Laxmi Gurung<sup>①</sup>, Sara Parker<sup>②</sup> and Madhusudan Subedi<sup>③</sup>**

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<sup>①</sup>Dignity Without Danger, Tribhuvan University, Nepal; <sup>②</sup>Liverpool John Moores University, UK; <sup>③</sup>Patan Academy of Health Sciences, Nepal

Menstruation is one of the essential biological processes that assures the continuation of the human species. However, menstrual practices had been culturally framed where in global north it is associated with shame and guilt, whereas in South Asia it is associated with ritual impurity. To analyze taboos and stigma attached with menstruation in Global South particularly in Nepal, research was carried out in thirteen districts of Nepal between 2019 and 2021 under a British Academy-funded project entitled 'Dignity Without Danger'. The paper will present the findings of the research as well as explore the roots of menstrual exclusion in Hinduism and critically analyze the contemporary menstrual practices in Hindu communities of western Nepal.

The paper presents the myths related origins of menstruation and menstrual practices presented in Hindu religious text. Taking these texts as normative guideline, in second half of the paper explore the contemporary menstrual practices in Hindu communities of western Nepal namely- Dailekh, Jumala, Kanchanpur and Achham. Through the interviews with 78 women of these districts an exhaustive list of exclusionary menstrual practices and associated rituals is presented in the paper. The paper also provides an in-depth overview of the socio-cultural structure of each researched community which ensures the continuation of exclusionary menstrual practices. The paper aims to contribute to the menstrual discourse in Nepal which still looks the current exclusionary menstrual practices from a superficial glance. It suggests that legal interventions and awareness campaigns initiated by NGOs that ignore the deep-rooted religious dogma and the social structures that maintain these practices will fail to achieve their goal of ending exclusionary menstrual practices unless they are developed from the local level and are contextual.

# Menstrual Apps as Medical Information and Self Knowledge

**Bryndl Hohmann-Marriott, Jane Girling, Tiffany Williams**

*University of Otago, New Zealand*

Menstrual cycle apps are increasingly being used for self-tracking. The information these apps are collecting and providing could potentially play a role in healthcare and wellbeing as well as for cycle-linked conditions such as endometriosis, PCOS, in/fertility, and peri/menopause. We asked healthcare providers, app users, and patients in Aotearoa New Zealand for their perspective on the role of apps in healthcare, via a qualitative survey with 144 participants and three focus groups with 10 participants. Analysis of participant perspectives shows that apps can offer a reliable history of cycle and symptom dates. Patients are also hoping that apps will help them to manage their conditions. Although some apps offer diagnostic suggestions (for example PCOS and endometriosis symptoms and ovulation timing for fertility), healthcare professionals are sceptical about their accuracy. Apps are also described as contributing to self-knowledge. Based on our study, we offer suggestions and open discussions about whether, when, and how apps could play a role in healthcare and menstrual cycle knowledge and wellbeing.

## The Menstrual Health Research Network of Aotearoa New Zealand

**Bryndl Hohmann-Marriott, Arianna Nisa-Waller, Claire Henry, Michael Pankhurst, Jane Girling**

*University of Otago, New Zealand*

We would like to introduce the Menstrual Health Research Network, established in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2022. Our aim is to improve the mental, physical and spiritual hauora (health) of wāhine (women/girls), menstruators, and their supporters and whanau (family) in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific by promoting and facilitating interdisciplinary collaborative research related to the menstrual cycle and menstruation.

Our goal is a broad and inclusive Network with community partnership and participation at all stages. We value multiple knowledges including Māori, Pacific, Indigenous and Western approaches. The Network aims to foster cross-disciplinary and multimethod research while closely engaging with mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledges and ways of knowing).

Recognizing that success will be dependent on developing and sustaining strong relationships between community and researchers, we have chosen to progress the network slowly and with care. Initially, we established a monthly series incorporating seminars, public events, research planning, and a forum for early career researchers. We have also held a very successful 2-day Hui (meeting) in November 2022. Our discussions have set the scene for establishing our network values and future research goals.

Menstrual Health Research Network activities will build and develop through ongoing engagement bringing together community groups, practitioners, researchers, advocates and other interested groups and individuals to facilitate research that strives for our aim.



# A Global Research and Learning Agenda for Building Evidence on Contraceptive-Induced Menstrual Changes for Research, Product Development, Policies, and Programs

Emily Hoppes and Amelia Mackenzie

*The contraceptive-induced menstrual changes (CIMC) Task Force; FHI 360*

Contraceptive-induced menstrual changes (CIMCs) encompass all changes to the menstrual cycle while using contraception. CIMCs can affect the lives of people who menstruate in both positive and negative ways. These include consequences such as dissatisfaction with and discontinuation of contraceptives or negative impacts on quality of life; as well as opportunities, such as potential management of menstrual disorders and reduced spending if fewer menstrual materials are needed. Despite the significance of this issue for people who menstruate and use contraception, and despite important wider links between family planning (FP) and menstrual health (MH), neither field comprehensively addresses CIMCs in research, product development, policies, and programs globally. In 2022, the Global CIMC Task Force brought together a multi-disciplinary group made up of 28 menstrual health and family planning experts from 18 organizations and 10 countries to participate in a collaborative process to develop, build consensus around, publish, and disseminate globally the Global Research and Learning Agenda: Building Evidence on Contraceptive-Induced Menstrual Changes in Research, Product Development, Policies, and Programs (the CIMC Global RLA). The CIMC Global RLA includes four research agendas for (1) measurement, (2) contraceptive research and development (R&D) and biomedical research, (3) social-behavioral and user preferences research, and (4) programmatic research. It calls on researchers, product developers, health care providers, program implementors, advocates, policymakers, and funders to conduct research and implement strategies to address the beneficial and negative effects of CIMCs and support the integration of FP and MH. Due consideration of CIMCs will help to avoid missed opportunities to integrate MH into FP and sexual and reproductive health and vice versa. Moving forward, CIMCs need to be addressed to improve the health and well-being of women, girls, and other people who menstruate and use contraceptives globally.

## Is the priority vaccines or pads?: The Brazilian government's veto on menstrual health care during the covid-19 crisis

Isabela Hümmelgen

*Central European University*

In October 2021, after its approval by the Brazilian Congress, the legislation to institute a national menstrual health program (Law n. 14.214) was substantially vetoed by President Jair Bolsonaro. Urged to offer an explanation, Damares Alves, the Minister of the Woman, the Family, and Human Rights, reacted by asking: 'Is the priority vaccines or pads?' In this paper, the debates around law n. 14.214/2021 serve as a case study to address the political discourses about menstrual health in



Brazil. Alves's statement is an initial point to consider how the neoliberal rationale hinders the implementation of (gendered) health care rights by disregarding them as a priority. Considering this context, this paper aims to analyze the government's discourses about menstrual health care and austerity during an aggravated crisis (of the covid-19 pandemic). The methodological frame adopted is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which is a qualitative technique that allows for a reading of the legal texts and discourses embedded in their socio-political context. Based on the analysis of the case study, this research finds that the lens of care serves to place the discussions about menstrual health into the context of systematic crisis, in which the government's neoliberal politics justify their disregard for gendered human rights by relying on the austerity claim that there is no alternative. Thus, Alves's statement unravels that menstrual health care is not a prioritized public policy because it is considered a personal crisis, to be solved at the private sphere by the individuals themselves.

## MenstrualCup: exploring menstrual management online in uncertain times as a posthuman phenomenon

Amelia Ignire

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*Cardiff University, Wales*

**Background:** This presentation explores the surprising and interesting assemblages between menstrual management and digital worlds, focusing on one stage of data collection from my PhD entitled Period Products, Period Poverty and the Future of the Environment. My PhD discovers ways menstrual cups are being discussed on social media and explores the ways that menstruation is materialized in a posthuman digital social world.

**Method:** Data was collected by searching for the #MenstrualCup on TikTok and recording the top 50 results. Then information was collected (likes, comments, hashtags, caption etc.) and thematic and visual analysis conducted.

**Results:** Data collection is ongoing and due to be completed April 2023. Preliminary findings include:

- Representations of the posthuman self:
- menstrual cup users have an ongoing relationship with their cup as it is used for up to a decade, as opposed to tampons which were necessarily disposable because of safety
- an awareness of the ways in which the cycle is related to the earth, especially the impact the use of menstrual products has on the planet.
- Commodification of reusable products, many of the videos are from companies or influencers advertising menstrual cups
- Communication techniques to deal with talking about menstruation, use of comedy, deliberately provocative language/images and drama as a way of talking about a topic still considered taboo.

**Implications (preliminary implications as data collection is ongoing):** i) there is a complex relationship between offline and online worlds in this content ii) the material matterings of menstruation come to the fore even when using metaphor and models to discuss in video format and iii) techniques are employed to discuss menstruation in a public space, sometimes this is very subversive and challenging to norms, but sometimes it perpetuates them.

# From Humanities to Applied Health Sciences: The Possibilities of An Interdisciplinary Approach to Menstrual Health

Charley Jones<sup>①</sup>, Camilla Mørk Røstvik<sup>②</sup>, Siladitya Bhattacharya<sup>①</sup>, Lucky Saraswat<sup>①</sup>

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<sup>①</sup>University of Aberdeen, Scotland; <sup>②</sup> University of Agder, Norway

In this paper, I explore the possibilities of an interdisciplinary approach to menstrual health for the future development of interventions, treatments, and menstrual health research.

It is known that most national and international clinical guidelines (NICE) focus on heavy periods at the expense of other menstrual problems that have an adverse impact on quality of life, however, it is not known why this is the case and what menstruators perceive to be a menstrual problem requiring medical attention. Similarly, treatment options for menstrual health tend to focus on the cessation of menstrual bleeding, is this what menstruators want? A holistic, interdisciplinary approach that considers cultural, historical, and social perceptions of menstrual health problems and treatment will inform medical research and clinical practice that goes beyond heavy menstrual bleeding.

Through the analysis of primary historical and cultural archives, I aim to understand how 'menstrual health' and 'menstrual problems' have been perceived culturally and by menstruators. Through the analysis of the continuities and changes of medical literature and menstrual health research, I aim to understand how and why menstrual health treatment has developed. Combining this research with interviews and focus groups to understand how menstruators experience and understand menstrual health today, I aim to inform the future direction of clinical research and practice."

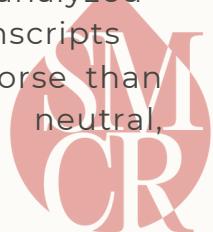
## The Transition to Motherhood after Experiencing Infertility

Ellie Kerhin and Jessica Barnack-Tavlaris

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*The College of New Jersey, US*

Expectations for parenthood are influenced by books, media, previous experiences, family and social groups, and the medical community. Previous empirical literature shows how these expectations affect outcomes in parenthood but more research is needed on those specific to parents who previously experienced infertility. The purpose of this study was to examine the influences and effects of parenting expectations and infertility on the experience of motherhood. Participants included 25 women between the ages of 31-47 ( $M=38.92$ ,  $SD=4.34$ ), 92% of which self-reported their race/ethnicity as white. Participants answered approximately 10 questions and the interviews were transcribed verbatim. In this poster, we will present an analysis of participants' responses to the question, "How did your experience with motherhood differ than your expectations?" We analyzed the data using thematic analysis. First, we reviewed and discussed the transcripts in order to develop the codebook, which included six codes (harder/worse than expected, easier/better than expected, as expected, unexpected neutral, expectations source, explanation for).



Next, we coded the data and drafted initial themes. After discussing the themes and reconciling differences between coders, four themes emerged from the data (harder than expected, impact of expectation source, lack of control during birth and motherhood transition, unique to infertility). These results were limited by small sample size, data collection at a single time point, and a lack of sociodemographic diversity. We will discuss the implications of the findings for resources, education, and systemic changes needed to provide parents with more realistic expectations and support, which can then have a positive impact on well-being.

## Black Box: The reduction and mystification of the menstrual cycle in Western school and medical education

Sally King

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*Menstrual Matters; Sociological Review Fellow, UK*

A review of UK school biology, general medical, and gynecological physiology textbooks revealed that the menstrual cycle is almost universally depicted as 'fluctuations in hormone levels'. This highly abstract and reductive Western biomedical model omits key information about the purpose and physiology of the three main processes involved in the cycle (ovulation, spontaneous decidualization, and menstruation). By doing so, alternative physiological factors in embodied cyclical experiences are obscured, resulting in a tendency to attribute causation to reproductive hormones, despite ample contradictory evidence. The omission also positions the female body as inherently mysterious, which limits clinical research and practice regarding the diagnosis and treatment of menstrual health issues. What is more, the hormonal model reproduces persistent gender myths regarding women's health, role, and status in society. It is, therefore, crucially important that more comprehensive menstrual physiology be taught across all educational contexts, to improve menstrual health and wellbeing, clinical research and practice, and to help counter sexist discourses and gender discrimination.

The textbooks selected for review are also widely used in schools, universities and clinics across the UK, Europe, North America, and many other countries influenced by Western thought. In total, sixteen books were purposefully selected, based on their relevance and popularity of use by five key audiences: Secondary school students, life sciences/ medical undergraduate students, specialist Obstetrics & Gynecology (OBGYN) medical students, qualified medical clinicians (General Practice and OBGYN), and critical health students, academics, and clinicians. Since all UK school children are formally tested on the workings of the menstrual cycle when they are around 16 years old, publications from the two main (GCSE) examination boards were included in the review. The general physiology textbooks included here are the top six recommended for medical students. The five specialist reproductive physiology textbooks reviewed are currently the bestselling publications on this topic in the UK. Finally, the *Handbook of Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health*, was included as an alternative (explicitly feminist) account of female reproductive physiology.

# The New Science of Menses - not your mother's period

## Nancy King Reame and Hilla Shaviv

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*Columbia University, US*

Menstrual cycle events like changes in cervical mucous, basal body temperature, cycle regularity and the timing of the final menstrual period have all been used to assess reproductive health in people with periods. More recently, the menses itself has come under scrutiny by the femtech industry and others as a potential new biomarker for endometrial health as well as disease conditions such as gynecologic cancers, diabetes and anemia. This paper will review the current state-of-the science of the biology of menstrual fluid, factors affecting flow and fluid properties, methods for collection and laboratory assessment, and its application to clinical diagnostics as well as improved period product testing. Future research directions will be discussed including menstrual blood banking as a source for human stem cells, with a special focus on the implications for those with heavy menstrual flow. A case study will be presented of one femtech company's efforts, led by a woman mechanical engineer, to bring a hybrid tampon device to market for quantifying menses volume and use in home testing.

## Extremely intimate and incredibly public: Free menstrual products and 'the problem' of menstruation in the Finnish public discourse

Aino Koskenniemi

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*University of Helsinki, Finland*

In December 2021, the Helsinki City Council decided on a trial for distributing free menstrual products in schools and educational institutions. The act follows similar decisions on city and state levels internationally aiming to decrease inequality and destigmatize menstruation.

This paper utilizes poststructuralist policy analysis to examine the construction of menstruation in the Helsinki city policy and the public debate that ensued the motion. The research materials include policy documents, online news articles, and over 4000 comments on online discussion fora and social media. Drawing on Carol Bacchi's (2009) 'What is the problem represented to be?' approach to policy analysis, the article demonstrates how the Finnish debate on menstrual policy constructs menstruation as a problem on two levels. On the one hand, menstruation is represented as an intimate, embodied problem of suffering and bleeding management experienced by individuals, while on the other hand, the debate redefines menstruation as a public problem generating social inequality and environmental pollution.

Based on the analysis, the paper argues that the menstrual stigma is both reinforced and challenged in the policy and in the public debate. The stigma is reinforced by representing menstruation as "the problem" rather than the social structures stigmatizing menstruators. However, redefining menstrual bleeding as a public issue and publicly acknowledging the practical needs of menstruating people also challenges the stigma by defying norms of menstrual invisibility and silence."

# Use of reusable menstrual products: An ecofeminist practice

Anna Kubovski

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*University of Haifa, Israel*

Numerous cultural studies of modern menstrual discourse have focused on how contemporary western menstrual practices are rooted in patriarchal-capitalist bias. Among these studies, those that examine menstruation from an ecofeminist perspective are rare. However, testing how menstruation representation affects the ecofeminist practice of using reusable menstruation products (RMPs) is essential, since it influences menstruators' consumer behavior and menstruation perception. Therefore, in the suggested paper, I perform an ecofeminist-oriented investigation in the field of menstruation and environmental quality to shed light on the ecofeminist practice of using RMPs. Specifically, I present, for the first time, how Israeli menstruators that carry out this ecofeminist practice experience and manage menstruation, against the backdrop of menstrual concealment culture and personal barriers existing in the prevalent menstrual discourse.

To do this, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Israeli menstruators who use RMPs. The results demonstrate that instead of complying with the capitalist menstrual discourse and aligning with concealment culture, RMPs users perform a silent political revolution against the patriarchal-capitalist culture, thus creating a platform for change. For example, it can reduce stigmatization, improve attitudes to menstruation, normalize menstruation experiences, change menstruation perceptions positively, and reshape critical, cultural, and consumer discourse about the menstrual cycle, menstruation, menstrual body, and menstrual blood.

It seems that ecofeminist practice can function as a disruptor of the fundamental building block of capitalist-consumer culture, not only as a 'sustainable' product in a consumption-based economy but also as the enclosure of the female reproductive body through denial of its lived experience. Finally, menstruators' experiences and perceptions of menstrual products must be acknowledged, particularly in designing and implementing menstrual policies and educational programs, which should include informed choices on menstrual products and transmit knowledge about menstruation and the menstrual cycle, thus enabling all menstruators to make informed decisions benefiting their health.

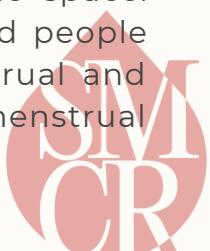
## Celebrating Green Lobbying in Menstrual Matters

Rajasi Kulkarni Diwakar

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*Aditya Birla Education Trust, India*

Over the years, many alliances have grown in India. All of them are informal and not registered. These alliances have done one important thing of getting practitioners, manufacturers, like-minded people together to learn, inspire each other and grow the body of work in the menstrual health and hygiene space. These alliances were started in the last 4-6 years and they have reached people from all over India and advocated for relevant causes related to menstrual and reproductive health. These alliances have been promoting sustainable menstrual products and practices at various levels.



They support each other's work and that has immensely helped in growing the movement of sustainable/green menstruation. Many new manufacturers could grow and start their work owing to the support from such alliances. These alliances have been doing advocacy at Government level and that has led to inclusion of certain things in the national policies. One alliance, MHAi has successfully advocated for standards for menstrual health products and now they are updated and new additions are made as per changing requirements. These alliances will work as pillars for advocating menstrual health at Government level and can be catalyst in bringing systemic changes.

## Testing Biodegradable Products; Their Efficacy and Claims!

Rajasi Kulkarni Diwakar

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*Aditya Birla Education Trust, India*

In 2018-19, some volunteers at Green the Red Collective, experimented on biodegradable menstrual pads to test their efficacy and claims. The experiment was conducted on 4 different brands and as a follow-up, recently another experiment is being conducted on the same brands and few more. Over the years, the brands have evolved, changed some of their ingredients, some made changes in the size, their packaging etc.

Many menstruators are now opting for menstrual cups and reusable cloth pads, which has little or no environmental impact. Several have begun to choose 'biodegradable' menstrual pads. However, there has been some debate regarding how sustainable these biodegradable pads are. Terms like 'sustainable', 'biodegradable' and 'compostable' are used interchangeably without understanding their meanings.

For it to be environment-friendly, the compostable pads must be designed with only plant-based compostable materials such as bamboo, banana fibres or cornstarch, etc. They are generally mixed with Super Absorbent Polymer (SAP) to make the pads more absorbent and last for 4-6 hours.

The pads labelled as biodegradable should be ISO 17088:2021-certified from government-authorized testing facilities, which outlines the procedures and requirements for identifying and labelling products made of plastics appropriate for aerobic composting. However in India, lot of menstrual products do not undergo any testing and the surety of its safety, durability, quality of ingredients remains unknown.

Since many menstruators are shifting to these biodegradable pads, there are many concerns that are raised- 1. Are they really eco-friendly as they claim? 2. Is there an industrial composting facility in place that accepts these biodegradable compostable pads? 3. How comfortable are we mixing biomedical waste with wet waste that will turn manure for our gardens? Is there research proving this is a completely safe method to practice?

If we are NOT COMPOSTING them at home, then these products go through the same process of treatment - either burners (which are below WHO standards in India) or most often, end up in landfills after being segregated by waste pickers. Once they are mixed with other waste,



there is a very less chance that they will biodegrade on their own in landfills. This paper will address all these questions and concerns related to biodegradable pads.

## Building a Period-friendly Environment in Public Spaces, Campuses, and Private-own Spaces with Public-Private-People-Partnership

Wei (Vivi) Lin, Yin-Chu Lin

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*With Red & Period Museum, Taiwan & United Kingdom*

Borrowing a pad or tampon from others is a shared experience among most menstruators. According to our survey done in 2021 with 2K+ Taiwanese menstruators, 90% have had similar experiences, and 58% have faced the dilemma of having no access to any of the products. Moreover, more than half of the respondents highlighted how menstruation had restrained their mobility due to: the lack of safe and hygienic places to change period products or to rest, constant worrying about leakage, and experiencing menstrual discomforts such as cramps, headaches and nausea. Therefore, building a period-friendly environment that is inclusive, compassionate and accessible to all menstruators is utterly essential in breaking period stigmas and promoting a more positive attitude towards menstruation.

As an international NGO, With Red aspires to make menstruation no longer a barrier to opportunities, choices and well-being in Taiwan, Asia, and the world. Since 2019, we have established a 'Period-Friendly Space' program open to all physical spaces worldwide. In the program, we designed a scheme with a holistic approach for physical spaces to follow to create a more friendly environment for menstruators. An online open-source map is also freely available for users to look up period-friendly spaces around them. In 2022, we escalated the project and built a Period Museum named 'The Red House' in Taipei, attracting thousands of visitors worldwide to join the movement. Throughout our four years of work, we have united more than 200 partners/spaces to participate in the program. In addition, we engaged multiple local governments in the program and supported them in shaping the city with a more period-friendly approach. Spaces that have joined, including metro stations, community centers, private-own cafes, dental clinics, and campuses, have also become influential actors in promoting period equity.

This research is a mixed-method study, including both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative approaches include key stakeholder interviews and observational site visits. Quantitative data are collected via questionnaire surveys on users of the online map or visitors of the period-friendly spaces. We aim to evaluate innovative strategies for building period-friendly environments and the impact of Public-Private-People-Partnership. With the findings of this research, we seek to elaborate on how we can utilize spaces as a form of advocacy to break period stigmas and create a more supportive and compassionate culture for everyone who does/doesn't menstruate.

# Recent Social-behavioral Research on Changes to the Menstrual Cycle while Using Contraception: Evidence From Six Studies across Seven Countries in East and West Africa

Amelia Mackenzie, Emily Hoppes, Stephanie Chung, Aurélie Brunie, Rebecca Callahan, Dawn Chin-Quee, Marga Eichleay, Elena Lebetkin and Kate Rademacher

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FHI 360

**Background:** Options for preventing pregnancy are limited for people who ovulate and menstruate. The most effective methods can cause changes to the menstrual cycle (e.g., changes in bleeding patterns, effluent, cramping, other symptoms). Literature on these menstrual changes has limitations; research largely: (1) comes from North America and Europe; (2) is only quantitative and cross-sectional; (3) does not distinguish menstrual changes from other contraceptive side effects; and (4) does not explore the wider impact of menstrual changes, including how they may hinder menstrual cycle knowledge and recognition of pregnancy or perimenopause.

**Methods:** We explored social-behavioral outcomes from across six recent mixed methods studies, three of them longitudinal, in seven countries. Primary studies were conducted in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and Zambia between 2016 and 2019. We took a meta-synthesis approach via secondary analysis of datasets and qualitatively coding 17 papers/reports to examine commonalities.

**Results:** We identified four common themes: (1) people experience different bleeding profiles when using the same contraceptive method for the same duration, and these are often different from drug labels; (2) provider counseling experiences differ but are often not sufficiently detailed to prepare people for menstrual changes; (3) perceptions of different types of menstrual changes vary widely within and across contexts; and (4) people may have different menstrual health needs when experiencing menstrual changes.

**Implications:** By addressing limitations of the literature, our findings make an important contribution to knowledge of menstrual changes caused by contraception, moving beyond results from individual studies. Most notable for those studying the menstrual cycle are: (a) there is a wide diversity in experiences with, counseling given about, and perceptions of menstrual changes; and (b) people experiencing menstrual changes may have unique menstrual health needs, including the types and quantities of materials needed to collect/absorb menstrual blood and access to clean and safe places to change, wash, and dry these materials. Additional nuanced research on menstrual changes will assist in better meeting the menstrual health needs of all people who menstruate.



# Pelvic Pain, Work Disruptions, and Medical Racism Among Black Women in the Washington DC Metropolitan Area: A Preliminary Report of the ENDO-Served study

Julia Mandeville, Lauren Kornegay, Nene Uwaomah, Anna Pollack and Jhumka Gupta

George Mason University, US

**Background:** Endometriosis impacts 1 in 10 women, and is a condition characterized by debilitating pelvic pain and activity impairment. Little is known about the lived experiences of Black Women with endometriosis. This study sought to understand how Black women with symptoms suggestive of endometriosis experience pain, work disruptions, and medical racism.

**Method:** Online cross-sectional survey in partnership with Endo Black, an endometriosis advocacy organization for Black Women (March 2022-present; study ongoing). The World Endometriosis Research Foundation Questionnaire was used to assess menstruation and pelvic pain. The Everyday Discrimination Scale assessed racism. The Work Productivity and Activity Impairment assessed disruptions. Frequency and means were calculated.

**Results:** 102 respondents met inclusion criteria and 81 consented to participate (79.4%). Average age was 32.8 years, with 96% US born. Forty reported an endometriosis diagnosis. Typical pelvic pain during menstruation was characterized as 'severe' (74.5%), and anxiety-inducing (73%). In the past week, there was 20.2% absenteeism, 34.4 % presenteeism and 47.6% work impairment for employed participants (n=37), with 37.9% overall impairment. Over half (57.5 %) indicated that a healthcare provider made assumptions about their ability based on racial stereotypes and more than 40% changed healthcare providers due to racial discrimination (42.6%). Participants who perceived they are treated with less respect than other people at least a few times a year, indicated 'my race' was a contributing factor (78.3%).

**Conclusion:** Black women with symptoms suggestive of endometriosis experience pelvic pain, work disruptions, and medical racism. Interventions to address pain and medical racism are needed.

## Stratified Menstruation: Implications for Menstrual Health

Rebecca Martinez and Risa Cromer

Purdue University, US

**Background:** Nearly 40% of the 600,000 people experiencing homelessness (PEH) are potential menstruators. Growing interest in menstrual health of PEH reveals their needs to be substantial and often unmet. PEH report dysregulated cycles exacerbated by stress and gynecological issues, and experience higher rates of unintended pregnancy and exposure to sexual violence, alongside systemic barriers to healthcare. Like other marginalized populations, PEH lack equitable access to menstrual health information, menstrual products, hygiene facilities, treatment, and stigma-free environments.



**Framework:** PEH's experiences provide critical insights into power relations that shape inequitable support for menstrual health, a phenomenon we call stratified menstruation. Using intersectional approaches in critical menstruation studies and anthropological literatures on stratified reproduction, stratified menstruation examines the social, institutional, and systemic factors that maintain a hierachal organization of menstrual health.

**Objective:** This ethnographic study explored the menstruation experiences of PEH during the COVID-19 pandemic at a transitional housing center in Indiana.

**Methods:** Part of an interdisciplinary public health research team, 12 guests were interviewed at the center about menstrual needs, knowledge, and strategies while experiencing homelessness. Ethnographically, we researched community health activities, interpersonal relationships, and the spatial environment.

**Results:** PEH encountered social, institutional, and systemic stressors that exacerbated their menstrual health and overall wellbeing such as restricted access to menstrual products, spaces for personal hygiene, and health services.

**Implications:** Stratified menstruation experiences provide crucial insights for addressing barriers to menstrual health, which are elemental to the sexual, reproductive, and human rights under attack in the wake of the US Supreme Court's Dobbs ruling. This study supports existing findings on menstrual health needs of PEH, highlighting a substantial need for greater access to menstrual products, hygiene facilities, and health care. It adds to existing literatures showing how system inequalities persist in devaluing the sexual and reproductive wellbeing of certain populations while valuing others.

## Menstrual Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices among the Indigenous Tribal Groups of Nagarahole and Bandipur National Parks of Karnataka, India

Sanjana Murthy<sup>①</sup>, Sara E Baumann<sup>①</sup> and Dennis D Chauhan<sup>②</sup>

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<sup>①</sup>University of Pittsburgh, US; <sup>②</sup>Vivekananda Memorial Hospita, India

**Background:** Globally, there is a vast degree of variability in practices, traditions, and societal views surrounding menstruation. In India, there is great diversity in traditions by geographic regions and ethnic groups. This is the first known study that explores the menstrual practices and traditions of Tribal women in rural southern Karnataka, India. We also studied the influence of such practices on their everyday lives.

**Methods:** Twenty-eight interviews and seven focus group discussions were conducted with women from four tribes across eighteen different villages. Data were transcribed and translated from Kannada to English and coded using grounded theory in NVivo.

**Results:** Preliminary results highlight that practices, such as sleeping separately and not cooking while menstruating, have decreased in strictness over time. However, certain traditions have increased in grandeur, one being a ceremony and gathering of families to commemorate menarche. The overarching motivations for menstrual traditions are to ensure girls grow up healthy and strong, and to keep

their future families safe. Societal views of menstruation have shifted, with almost all participants stating that men no longer view menstruating women as unclean or dirty. The women expressed that they view menstruation as a normal physiological process. While women knew that menstruation was an important bodily function, none of the women could explain why menstruation occurs. In comparing traditions across tribes, women from the Jenu Kuruba tribe had stricter practices and expressed less willingness to change their practices compared to women from the other three tribes.

**Implications:** There is a need for additional awareness and education surrounding menstruation among this population of tribal women to ensure understanding and healthy practices. More research is required to investigate the generational shifts in practices to better understand the role they play in impacting positive societal attitudes about menstruation.

## Breaching the Labial Lips: Finding New Language Through the Menstrual Poem

Rachel Neve-Midbar

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*University of Southern California, US*

We want to talk about our menstruation, tell our stories, these stories that have been silenced by and within every walk of society for millennia. But silence has brought us a dearth of language, of the very words we need to express, whether critically or creatively, all aspects of the menstruation story. We need to find the words. But how?

In human discourse we know that the more we talk about an object the more names we create for that object, each name building on the last to provide color and distinction of the many nuances contained within the object. Because poetry has a revolutionary dimension it compels us to not only see experience differently, but allows for new words to express that experience. 'Poetry is not only doing something with language, but also something to language'

While poetry has long explored bodily experiences within a tradition of witnessing and confessional verse, only recently has a 'poetics of menstruation' begun to crystalize as a movement and powerful subgenre. Today's poets are no longer satisfied with the acceptable. They dismiss the abject-effective response to the body, breaching boundaries across prohibited aspects of menstruation: sex, scents, stains, fertility, illness and dysphoria. Poets are taking on an internal and private experience (menstruation) as witnesses and confessors, reframing what has been deemed, within patriarchal culture as shameful to insist upon menstruation as a transformative phenomenon that many experience.

Today's menstrual poems are lavish, unpredictable, full of rich language using diction, syntax, rhythm, imagination, knowledge, sympathy and the scope of the deepest feelings and experiences of the womb bearing body. 'There is a poem only if a form of life transforms a form of language and if reciprocally a form of language transforms a form of life.' Looking at contemporary poets such as Lucille Clifton, Kendra DeColo, Gabrielle Calvocoressi and I.S. Jones, we ask how does 'the poetics of menstruation' contribute to and extend a change in language that further facilitates the discourse around menstruation?

# Dignity Without Danger; Challenging Menstrual Discrimination through Creative Multimedia outputs insights from Nepal

**Sara Parker and DWD Team**

*Liverpool John Moores University, UK*

Dignity Without Danger is a research project funded by the British Academy through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Sustainable Development Programme which ran from Jan 2019 to Dec 2022. It brought together staff from three Universities and 6 local NGO partners in Nepal. It explored the origins, diversity and impacts of local, social, religious and cultural menstrual practices, which deny people who menstruate the right to a 'Dignified Menstruation'. Local researchers were trained to conduct immersive ethnographic research in all 7 provinces of Nepal to gain a deeper insight into the variety of menstrual stigmas and taboos throughout Nepal and address the need to promote more 'dignified' menstruation practices.

A collaborative action research approach was taken and the team have worked with the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Partnership Alliance and a number of creative artists and activists in Nepal to develop creative and visual outputs to not only share the research findings but to enhance the dialogue that surrounds menstruation in Nepal. Developing creative multimedia outputs was one of the core objectives of the research proposal.

This presentation shares with the audience the key outputs that have been developed which includes two collaborative films, a book featuring the work being done by 34 menstrual activists, radio programs, art exhibitions in person and online, public augmented street murals, blog posts and a social media campaign. It also reflects on the key lessons learnt and explores the extent to which this approach has enabled us to decolonize the research process and acknowledge the agency of participants in Nepal. It seeks to address the way that visual methods have been used to empower local people to represent their own lived experiences. How the research team adapted to the challenges presented by the global pandemic will also be explored.

## Visualising Menstruation in Nepal Sharing creative visual multi media outputs to challenge menstrual stigmas and taboos in Nepal

**Sara Parker, Liverpool John Moores University and DWD Team of academics  
creative artists and activists**

Dignity Without Danger is a research project funded by the British Academy GCRF Sustainable Development Programme. It is a collaborative action research project that has brought together staff from three Universities, 6 local NGO partners in Nepal and a number of creative artists to explore the origins, diversity and impacts of local, social, religious and cultural menstrual practices, which deny people who menstruate the right to a 'Dignified Menstruation'.



This poster brings together the creative outputs including online books, virtual art exhibitions, blog posts, augmented public murals and collaborative films to gain feedback from a wider audience. Together they help challenge the dominant narrative in Nepal and help to generate dialogue into the complexities of menstrual experiences in Nepal. Making research findings accessible and facilitating a dialogue surrounding the concept of dignified menstruation is vital for the silence and stigma surrounding menstruation in Nepal, and further afield, to be broken.

Collaboration and producing creative educational visual advocacy outputs has been at the heart of the project since its inception. To this end the project has engaged with a number of creative artists in Nepal, such as the art collective Kaalo.101. Jay Poudyal from Stories of Nepal, Sophie Maliphant from Kumari's adventure with her moon cycle and collaborated with Sara Baumann and worked with women film makers in Far Western Nepal on a collaborative film project. We have gathered 34 stories of menstrual activists in Nepal to celebrate work being done from the grassroots to policy level to promote dignified menstruation.

## Menstrual dirt - An exploration of contemporary menstrual hygiene practices in Sweden

**Josefin Persdotter**

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*Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden*

Why is menstruation so often considered a dirty phenomenon, in both material and symbolic terms? How do ideas and realities of menstrual pollution affect the lived experience of menstruation and everyday hygiene practices?

Josefin Persdotter's study Menstrual Dirt explores how notions and materializations of pollution are enacted in different menstrual practices: in what products to use, in how to get rid of menstrual waste, how to clean reusables, wash the body and stained underwear, scrub toilets and avoid unwanted smells. It unpacks taken for granted aspects of menstrual life and reveals persistent gendered inequalities in relation to menstruation.

In focus are two specific menstrual technologies: the disposable pad and the reusable cup. The author shows how the promotion and use of these everyday technologies (re)produce menstruation as something dirty, symbolically and as a lived experience. Theoretical tools from the sociology of dirt, science and technology studies and anthropology are used to make sense of a wealth of interview and documentary material.

The study makes visible how menstrual pollution beliefs are (re)shaped in Sweden, a country with a comparatively high level of gender equality and menstrual activism. The results have implications in a wider context and for policies and technological changes to make menstruating into a less laborious and less negatively felt experience.

# The Continued Censoring of Menstruation in Adolescent Literature

## Carissa Pokorny-Golden

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*Pennsylvania Department of Education, US*

In 2013, I presented at the Society for Menstrual Cycle Research's Conference in New York City about menstruation in literature and the sad lack of coverage and banning of books discussing it and puberty as the normal, accepted changes that life brings. At that time, the American Library Association (ALA) reported an all-time low in book challenges since 1990, even though groundbreaking young adult novels discussing menstruation like *The Diary of Ann Frank* and *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret* by Judy Blume were still on banned book lists. Eight years later, in 2021 the ALA has reported a high in book challenges in 25 years, 729 challenges with over 1597 books targeted. And just as before, many of those books discuss menstruation, including *Gender Queer* by Maria Kobabe, which is no #1 on the ALA lists of banned books. This presentation will discuss not only banned books about menstruation, but also the positive changes some of these banned books are making toward acceptance and positivity towards menstruation, as well as the fact that more mainstream young adult literature and films are being produced than ever before about menstruation.

## Menstruation and the World of Work Organizations

### Petra Poncarová

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*Charles University, Czech Republic*

The purpose of the study was to investigate the so far quite unexplored topic of menstruation in the world of work organizations from sociological perspective. Through exploratory research and grounded theory method, the study focuses on the case of the Czech Republic and seeks to capture how Czech women cope with menstruation in the workplace. Women interested in participating in the research were first asked to answer a short online questionnaire. From this pool we chose 19 women (age 21-66) that differed from each other in terms of their professions, age, and to which extent is menstruation limiting for them and conducted qualitative interviews with them. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and subsequently coded and analyzed. This coding led to creation of categories and themes representing menstruation management and its different strategies and different usage of menstrual aids; menstruation in the space-time of work organizations; social norms associated with menstruation; planning associated with menstruation and menstruation as a reminder of corporeality. The analysis showed that menstruating women face many obstacles while doing their paid work, which can discriminate them. Furthermore, it has been found that menstruation restricts women during their work performance. Menstruating women must adhere with the social norms that dictate them to conceal their menstruation and symptoms that accompany it. The space-time of work organizations may not always correspond with the needs of menstruating women, whether they use disposable menstrual aids or more ecological option. The research also addresses the fact that women's corporeality within work organizations largely differs from men's corporeality. Because the male body does not have such specific needs as the menstruating body, it can be ignored, whereas women cannot ignore their bodies.



# "Flower of the body" Menstrual experiences and needs of adolescent women with cerebral palsy in Bangladesh, and their mothers providing support

Rosalie Power

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*Western Sydney University, Australia*

**Background:** This study offers voice to young adolescent women with cerebral palsy (CP) in Bangladesh as they describe their menstrual experiences and needs, and their mothers who provide support.

**Method:** Semi-structured focus groups were conducted with 45 women including 12 adolescent women with CP and separately 33 mothers or other female caregivers. Data was analyzed using a material discursive framework and drawing on feminist disability theory. Participants were recruited from the Bangladesh CP Register (BCPR); a population-based surveillance of children and adolescents with CP in rural Bangladesh.

**Results:** Participants reported a wide range of experiences and needs; menarche acted as a gateway to menstrual information although for some a discourse of silence prevailed due to exclusion from peer and familial networks. Menstruation was discursively constructed as a sign of 'female maturation' marked by an expectation of 'independence', required for acceptance into socially valued adult roles, and was positioned alongside increased vulnerability to sexual abuse. Adolescent women with CP were expected to 'quietly endure' the material aspects of menstruation although unmanaged pain and distress were described. Mothers reported an imperative for meeting their adolescent's menstrual needs however this role was discursively positioned as 'painful', 'irritating' and 'shameful', in part due to an absence of affordable, functional menstrual resources.

**Implications:** The findings of the present study provide motivation for disability services in Bangladesh to account for the menstrual needs of young adolescent women with CP within service delivery through strategies such as providing menstrual education and by embedding value in constructs such as 'interdependence'. Moreover, interventions focused on alleviating menstrual pain among young adolescent women with CP as well as those targeted to alleviate distress among mothers providing menstrual care are required. Finally, policy responses are required to ensure that 'inclusive development' considers the needs of menstruating women with disability.

## The (social) business of menstruation: What does it take for social entrepreneurs to succeed in their dual mission?

Maria Carmen Punzi and Pursey Heugens

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*Erasmus University, Netherlands*

In this paper we set to understand the combination of organizational design decisions leading to successful dual resource acquisition for social entrepreneurs. To do so, we study social ventures on a mission to improve global gender equity by addressing menstrual health issues.

We study the combination of organizational design decisions on venture design, partnership approach and issue engagement through which social entrepreneurs overcome the challenges of dual resource acquisition and create a solid and impactful social venture. We develop our ideas using a construed population of 40 social ventures operating in the menstrual health domain, all of which are seeking to participate in global grand challenges related to women's health and social participation. Analytically we rely on qualitative comparative analysis, drawing on interviews and secondary data. Our conjunctive outcome condition, which captures the extent to which social ventures are dually effective in simultaneously materializing social impact and marshaling the resources necessary to sustain the venture, is validated by survey responses from 30 field experts. We find four configurations: OG Change-Makers are trailblazers who addressed the taboo and lack of alternatives in the menstrual product market before other ventures even entered the market; Mainstream Activists offer alternative products and engage heavily in moral debate; Legitimized Innovators market a diversified product range, avoid structural partnerships and follow the latest trends; Out-of-the-box Latecomers, finally, joined when the issue field was already mature, trading heavy engagement in moral issues for humor, a light-hearted brand voice and a stamp of approval from experts. These configurations offer a new perspective on the issue of dual resource allocation, suggesting that social ventures can successfully accrue resources by combining organizational decisions that make a coherent strategy, attuned to the field stage and building on previous cohorts.

## A Period Positive Curriculum for England: a policy implementation case study from start to nearly finished!

Chella Quint

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*Period Positive, Sheffield Hallam University, UK*

The Period Positive National Curriculum is a menstruation education programme of study published in July 2022 and launched in UK Parliament. It covers each age and stage of education with links to English curriculum subject areas. It has been trialled and implemented locally and regionally and is part of a current campaign to get it approved nationally.

This paper outlines the process of developing and implementing a comprehensive menstruation and reproductive health curriculum model that is neither 'discrete' nor 'discreet'. Instead of existing solely as a separate programme of study for menstruation education, that under-funded teachers are pressed to squeeze into an already packed curriculum with little to no training, this detailed 'age and stage' spiral curriculum can take menstrual knowledge beyond the closed door of 'the period talk' and out into the open, where all school staff can disseminate menstrual learning by integrating it meaningfully across curriculum areas. Using a series of design challenges and award schemes that form an effective training programme, subject teachers have been assisted to integrate period-related themes and topics across school subjects with support from pupils, colleagues and school leaders in the authors' city and elsewhere in the UK.



The paper will conclude with recommendations for regionalisation and share strategies for incorporating it into existing school and state curriculum policies and provision, drawing from the case study and from other instances of international good practice.

## From Check-ins to Teach-ins: the Period Positive Global Network offers content, context and confidence

**Chella Quint<sup>①</sup>, Zoe Chan<sup>①</sup>, Jeddah Lemaron<sup>③</sup> & additional members of the Period Positive Global Network**

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<sup>①</sup>*Period Positive and Sheffield Hallam University, UK; ②Happperiod & Free Periods Hong Kong; ③The Malkia initiative, Kenya*

This is a case study on international cooperation, inspiration and mutual support toward a common goal.

This poster's aims are to share an example of globally linked menstrual literacy policy and practice, and to share learning points from working within a small and intentional partnership of aligned values. Co-authors will share current practice and reflect on the ways we have transferred, inspired, supported and translated our work into new contexts, with innovation and mutual support, to share how small-scale grassroots cooperation can lead to large-scale change.

Period Positive is a participatory research-based campaign committed to challenging and pushing the menstrual discourse forward so that it is in line with reproductive justice, social justice, and human rights values of equity, inclusivity and sustainability. In that vein, founder Chella Quint wanted to be able to refer international queries to local experts who shared these values, and put out a call for global partners at the 2019 SMCR conference in Colorado. Throughout the pandemic, members met up on Zoom, attended online conferences together, shared resources, collaborated on social media and through online gaming, translated campaigns, and learned from each other's strategies, wins and losses in the policy space. As the world started opening up, we began arranging visits to meet and share good practice. This has led to opportunities for in person education workshop skill swaps with the support of local school links in Sheffield UK, with some global partners enjoying the opportunity to build relationships with not just menstrual colleagues abroad, but with groups of young people and teachers in a genuine exchange.

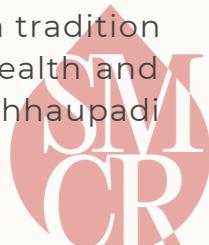
## Harnessing Human Centered Design Tools to Address Chhaupadi (Menstrual Seclusion) in Nepal

**Megan Rabin<sup>①</sup>, Sara Baumann<sup>①</sup>, Bhimsen Devkota, Kajol Upadhyaya, Guna Raj Shrestha, Mary Hawk and Jessica Burke**

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<sup>①</sup>*University of Pittsburgh, US*

**Background:** In parts of mid- and far-west Nepal, communities practice a tradition of menstrual isolation called chhaupadi, which is a threat to women's health and safety. The tradition was criminalized in 2017 but impacts of chhaupadi interventions remain short-lived.



**Methods:** We piloted novel, human-centered design (HCD) tools to engage community members in co-designing locally relevant interventions to sustainably address chhaupadi. HCD is a field and suite of tools that seek to engage diverse stakeholders in the production of comprehensive, user-focused solutions based on individual experiences, motivations, and beliefs. In Dailekh Nepal, our team conducted seven HCD activities over four days with a community design team of 10 women of various ages, caste/ethnic, educational, and occupational backgrounds. Phase 1 activities increased understanding of chhaupadi and built empathy. Phase 2 activities involved co-designing potential solutions to proposed menstrual problems and workshopping them into viable intervention opportunities targeting potential changemakers. The interventions were shared at two community-validation meetings with diverse stakeholders. The HCD process led to 5 unique chhaupdi intervention designs for 5 distinct stakeholder groups.

**Results:** The HCD process illuminated the importance of intervening to address chhaupadi at multiple levels of the socioecological model with various stakeholders. The following are key sub-themes elucidated by the activities:

- 1.Targeting various stakeholders is necessary to address chhaupadi (e.g., mothers, youth, community health workers, and teachers); however, community members expressed slightly different priority groups, highlighting the importance of community validation meetings in the process.
- 2.The co-design team and community members agreed that mothers and girls have significant power to challenge negative aspects of chhaupadi.
- 3.Behavior change activities are necessary through education and awareness over time, using a whole community approach, in conjunction with legal action.
- 4.The HCD process for co-design resulted in women feeling empowered in developing their own solutions.

**Implications:** Using HCD as a community-engaged approach to intervention development yielded novel and informative solutions that can be scaled to address global menstrual health and equity. This participatory and novel process encouraged community stakeholders to act as leaders and change agents in the chhaupadi intervention design.

## The Period is Political: Menstruation Begins with Blood

**Shaka Ramanathan & Jill M Wood**

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*Pennsylvania State University, US*

Decades of Western-centered menstrual activism has culminated in a conceptualization of menstrual equity that focuses primarily on menstrual product access and distribution (e.g. Bobel & Fahs, 2020; Helmick, 2020; Lysa, 2021). Menstruation has been positioned through Western frameworks of neoliberalism, consumerism, and capitalism, bypassing the necessary political struggles surrounding bleeding bodies. The apolitical construction of menstruation as a public health crisis, while deserving of global attention and resources, frames menstruation as a global issue focused on period product access, thereby placing the burden of product acquisition on menstruators. Drawing on feminist



menstrual scholarship (e.g. Bhandal, 2020; Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2020; Przybylo & Fahs, 2020), we argue that this perspective encourages menstrual management at the expense of body politics and visibility within menstrual activism. In this paper, the authors analyze menstrual equity from a decolonial, feminist perspective to challenge the menstrual concealment imperative (Wood, 2020) on sociocultural and institutional levels to expand the theoretical grounding of menstrual activism beyond neoliberal, consumerist perspectives. In doing so, we construct a theoretical framework of menstrual equity that centers bleeders, body literacy, and embodiment.

## Teenage Girls' Awareness and Experiences of Endometriosis in England: Implications for menstrual health education and endometriosis support

Amie Randhawa, Annalise Weckesser, Angela Hewett and Georgina Jones

Birmingham City University, UK

This presentation will highlight key findings, and implications for health and education policy interventions, of a dual method doctoral project that included a quantitative study on teenage girls' menstruation experiences and knowledge of endometriosis, and a qualitative study exploring the lived experiences of teenage girls with endometriosis.

**Background:** Endometriosis is a chronic condition affecting an estimated 1 in 10 (cisgender) women, many of whom report experiencing symptom onset during adolescence. Limited evidence suggests that symptoms disrupt key aspects of adolescent life. Delays in diagnosis are well documented and may partly be due to 'menstrual etiquettes' (Laws 1990) and the reluctance of teenagers to openly discuss symptoms. A lack of awareness about endometriosis may compound these delays.

**Methods:** 442 girls aged 15-19 years in secondary schools in the West Midlands, England completed a cross-sectional survey. The survey characterized typical menstrual characteristics, knowledge of typical menstruation, endometriosis awareness, and educational needs. Additionally, 24 teenage girls and young women (aged 15-24 years) with a confirmed diagnosis of endometriosis took part in semi-structured interviews that explored pathways to diagnosis and the impact of the condition on their everyday lives. Audio recorded interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed.

**Results:** Survey results showed almost a third (27%) of respondents did not know if their periods were typical, only 8% knew what endometriosis was, and 85% wanted to learn more about the condition. In interviews, teenagers reported feeling "in the dark" when their endometriosis symptoms began, with little prior knowledge about the condition or what constitutes a "normal" period. Peers' lack of awareness limited their provision of support. Furthermore, the available endometriosis resources and support were reported as ill-suited to their age group.

**Implications:** The presentation will conclude with evidenced-based recommendations for improving menstrual health education as well as endometriosis information and support for this age group.

# Slowing Down to Better Represent: The Role of Longitudinal Studies in Menopause Research

## Nomi Redding

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*Independent researcher, US*

In 1991, I joined the Society of Menstrual Cycle Research and began what I proposed as a 2-year pilot project on menopause based on the research of Dr. Alan Treloar in menstrual cycle studies and Dr. Murray Bowen in natural systems theory, particularly the human family as a product of evolution. It was a small study with a convenience sample from the heartland U.S. Eighty women ages 34 to 50 enrolled agreeing to record their menstrual cycles in data books provided to them as well as to participate in personal annual updates of their 3-4 generation family diagrams, health, and life situations. Ultimately, the project lasted twenty years until the final ""blank book"" was turned in and personal interview held in the fall of 2012. In that time forty-five participants documented their final menstrual periods and twenty-two stayed the length of the study, providing information from their post menopause years.

Given that it was a relatively homogeneous group, variation seen was remarkable for menstrual cycle experience, family composition and developmental stages, and decisions made by participants to manage challenges of the transition. My goal was not to intervene but simply to observe along with the participants what they were experiencing providing an atmosphere of respectful camaraderie, continuity, and interest. Looking back at the trajectory of the study, I am aware how important it is to study living beings over time as distinct from taking slices or snapshots. The women were clear they benefited both from the recording and being listened to in a nonjudgmental way and without expectations. This paper is formatted along three main points. To accurately represent women's experience requires: 1) deep listening; 2) allowing for surprise; and 3) respect for their self-education (empowerment). I was privileged to be alongside these participants for twenty years and am privileged now to present this paper on behalf of what we learned.

## Alterations of the menstrual cycle of young adults not occupationally exposed to a mixture of pesticides from an agricultural area of San Luis Potosí, Mexico. A pilot study

**Andrea Rodríguez-López<sup>①②</sup>, Rebeca Mejía-Saucedo, Jaqueline Calderón Hernández, Vanessa Labrada-Martagón and Leticia Yáñez-Estrada**

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<sup>①</sup>National Institute of Public Health of México; <sup>②</sup>Organizacion para Chicas, Mexico

Persistent organic pollutants are a group of chemical compounds of global concern due to the health damages caused by the exposure to them. Their capacity as endocrine disrupters is one of their main characteristics, being women in reproductive age the most vulnerable population. The aim of the present study was to evaluate the effect of exposure to a mixture of pesticides in the menstrual cycle of a sample of 29 teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17 years old from El Refugio, San Luis Potosí, Mexico, a community whose predominant

activity is agriculture. The participants were trained to record in a diary/logbook all the events related to their menstrual cycle. Serum levels of sex hormones were measured by chemiluminescence, and plasma concentrations of organochlorine (OC) pesticides and the level of dialkyl phosphates metabolites (DAPs) of organophosphorus agrochemicals presented in urine were measured through gas chromatographymass spectrometry. Around 41.6% of the participants presented some alteration in their hormonal levels, mainly of follicle-stimulating hormone and progesterone. Of these, OC pesticides in plasma were detected in 62% ( $\Sigma\text{EOC} = 1651.25 \text{ ng/g of lipid}$ ), and 66% had detectable levels of DAPs ( $\Sigma\text{EDAP} = 153.82 \text{ mg/g of creatinine}$ ). Together, these results suggest damage to the endocrine system that could be generated by exposure to a mixture of OC and organophosphorus pesticides could generate.

## Dignified Menstruation for All

**Andrea Rodríguez-López**

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*National Institute of Public Health of México; Organizacion para Chicas, Mexico*  
I am the founder of an NGO in Mexico called: Organization for Girls, OPC, in which we develop projects around the world on menstrual and sexual health. One of the largest projects we have is the human rights program in the country's cereros (women's prisons), in which our main objective is the empowerment of inmate women in terms of their sexual and menstrual health.

In the case of these centers, women are not provided with all the necessary products to have access to a healthy menstruation as a human right, and this has become a public health problem, since women who are isolated are easy targets for diseases and other more serious consequences to your health. Therefore, we created a project which allows us to provide health services to women, guaranteeing their health security and physical well-being for the full exercise of their capacities.

**Objective:** Dignified menstruation through the implementation of a project to provide menstrual supplies for women in social reintegration centers and menstrual education for all those belonging to these centers.

**Specific objectives:** Menstrual education workshop, sexual education and workshop to create their own cloth menstrual pads (prototype implemented by OPC). **Assessed impact:**

1. They were given the necessary theoretical and practical tools so that the women in these centers can access a decent menstruation, since this is a human right.
2. More than 300 towels were created by cereso in 5 different states.
3. Empathetic ties were created with the community so that by joining together we can all help the PPLs provide them with the necessary inputs.
4. Lastly, and no less important, the menstrual education for everyone was impacted, it is extremely important that in the centers we manage to change the mentality that menstruation is a disease or a responsibility only for women. Let's remember that on the one hand it is a biological process and we must understand it that way and approach it in this way, for which it should not be a taboo within society and on the other hand it is a human right to have a dignified menstruation for which it should be provide supplies which inmates can access for free.

# Faulty Bodies, Faulty Women: Joe Vincent Meigs and The Rise of Endometriosis, 1861-1949

Maria Rovito

Pennsylvania State University, US

Endometriosis challenges notions of femininity and reproduction. An illness defined by chronic pain and infertility, endometriosis attracted one physician in particular who devoted his research to determining how this disease causes infertility in female patients, most of whom were white, upper-class women. Joseph Vincent Meigs, the chair of the gynecology department at Harvard Medical School from 1932 to 1955 and instructor of surgery, constructed a narrative about endometriosis during this time that the disease was a result of feminism, women's economic freedom, and desire to join the workforce rather than become mothers (1949). Resulting from his work at private clinics and the public Boston General Hospital, Meigs determined that endometriosis was a consequence of delayed childbearing by white, upper-class women who engaged in feminist practices, educational opportunities, and financial independence (2). Due to these lifestyle choices, women with endometriosis were forced to suffer with pain and infertility, as Meigs postured that women's liberation caused a lack of 'the production of the best children of the nation' (2). Meigs' research gave way to the belief that to cure endometriosis is to marry and procreate early in a woman's life. His research influenced further endometriosis studies in the US, particularly during the 1940s and 1950s as a result of increased medical funding during World War II, as well as the first popular culture portrayals of the disease in 1948. By investigating infertility due to endometriosis at a time when women were earning their liberation, Meigs inevitably linked the disease to traditional gender norms and household duties. Infertility is thus framed as a , failure of being a woman, as one's ovaries and uterus were being destroyed by this new , enigmatic, disease. This presentation will investigate a feminist disability studies' analysis of Meigs' construction of a narrative of endometriosis that promoted the disease as the fault of feminism and women's careers. This project stems from my dissertation, which analyzes Meigs' writings stored at Harvard Medical School which have never been used before.

## Managing the premenstrual body: a body mapping study of women's negotiation of premenstrual food cravings and exercise

Samantha Ryan, Jane M. Ussher & Alexandra Hawkey

Western Sydney University, Australia

Women's eating behaviors and exercise patterns have been found to fluctuate across the menstrual cycle, manifested by premenstrual food cravings and reduced exercise. However, the meaning and consequences of premenstrual changes in eating and exercise behaviors remains underexplored. The aim of this qualitative study was to explore how women who feel negatively about their premenstrual bodies construct and experience premenstrual changes to eating and exercise practices, which disrupt their usual patterns of body management.



Four hundred and sixty women aged 18–45 completed an online survey in response to a Facebook advertisement targeted at women who feel negatively about their bodies during the premenstrual phase of the cycle. Participants reported moderate premenstrual distress, high body shame and high risk of disordered eating attitudes using standardized measures. Sixteen women reporting rich accounts of premenstrual body dissatisfaction were invited to participate in body-mapping, involving visually illustrating experiences on a life-sized outline of the body, followed by a telephone interview. Thematic analysis was used to explore qualitative survey, interview, and body-mapping data.

Results found that outside of the premenstrual phase women engaged in restrictive eating and intensive exercise behaviors, which were disrupted by premenstrual cravings, hunger, fatigue, pain and feeling physically uncomfortable. For a minority of women, this facilitated self-care in reducing the strict management of their bodies during the premenstrual phase including relaxing restrictive eating and exercise behaviors. Others experienced feelings of guilt, shame, self-disgust and pushed their bodies physically through increased exercise. These findings emphasize the need to acknowledge changes in body management across the menstrual cycle, with implications for women's mental health and feelings about the self. Internalization of pressures placed on women to manage their bodies through restrictive eating behaviors and rigorous exercise plays a role in women's premenstrual body dissatisfaction and distress.

## Menarche memories and current attitudes towards menstruation in relation to the teaching practice: An exploratory and comparative study among menstrual and menopausal Primary teachers in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area

Marina Saladrigas Clemente

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*Stockholm University, Sweden*

The menstrual period holds plenty of meanings across different cultures and generations. While menstruating is an indicator of health, menarche seems to be met in isolation, with a lack of information and along many stigmas and stereotypes. This research aims to explore and compare menstrual and menopausal women's relationship between early and current menstrual experiences in relation to their role as primary teachers. The study will be conducted among Primary school teachers within the Barcelona Metropolitan area. Accordingly, three research questions are developed:

- How do menstrual and menopausal teachers narrate their memories of menarche and their current menstrual/menopausal relation?
- How do menstrual and menopausal teachers describe their approach to menstrual issues in the school context?
- In which ways are menarcheal memories reflected in the daily practice of menstrual and menopausal teachers?
- What are the similarities and differences in the experiences of menstrual and menopausal teachers?

To explore these experiences, two homogenous focus groups will be simultaneously held. The focus group will be unfolded as a tool to engage in an interactive discussion. From this stance, meanings of the menstrual phenomenon are meant to be further examined, concretely through thematic analysis. Throughout this research it is intended to find out concrete and relevant menstrual experiences that women encounter both as individuals and professionals and how it impacts their role as teachers.

Education on and about the menstrual cycle holds potential to transform and improve the life of girls and women from different contexts and generations. Thus, raising the issue of menstruation among the people who experience this life event is essential to promote menstrual education.

## Menstrual experiences among female international students within their personal and professional spheres of life in the field of education

**Marina Saladrigas Clemente**

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*Stockholm University, Sweden*

What crosses the mind of women when raising the issue of the menstrual cycle? Expressions like "annoying", "nothing special", "not painful", "white pants" and feelings such as "anxiety" and "strong pain" are brought up. The way girls and women go through the menstrual cycle matters. In the same way that the interplay between the different spheres of life can uncover an holistic picture of menstrual experiences. We bleed while we walk, think, run, talk, sleep, eat, but also while we work, why is then menstrual talk strictly confined to a private domain?

This paper aims at exploring women's menstrual experiences within their personal and professional spheres of life, in the field of education, along with three research questions:

- In which ways do the participants experience the menstrual cycle in the personal sphere of their life?
- In which ways do the participants experience the menstrual cycle in the professional sphere of their life?
- How do participants experience the menstrual cycle when the personal sphere meets the professional dimension?

Six women who are former international students and teachers participated in a focus group. During the discussion, several topics related to menarche, the period, sexuality, communication about menstruation, the menstrual cycle, and their role as teachers were raised. Using thematic analysis, concrete experiences, attitudes, and thoughts around the menstrual phenomenon are examined. This research intends to get an insight into the menstrual and menarche experiences of women. Specifically, as migrant women, individuals and both students and teachers, while exploring how do these experiences impact their role as educators.



# Analysing the role+D:K of menstrual health literacy on how menstruation is experienced in Spain

Sara Sánchez López①, Dani Barrington, Santiago Moll López and Rocío Poveda Bautista

①Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain

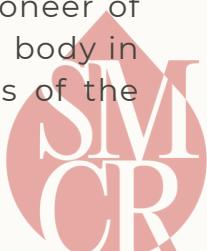
There is increasing recognition of the important role that menstrual health plays in promoting health, education, and gender equality. However, taboo and stigmatization remain present and negative emotions like fear and shame dominate the narrative surrounding menstruation. This study explores how menstrual education is received in Spain to understand the impact of menstrual health literacy on the way menstruation is experienced, and analyses what information should be included in formal menstrual education. An online survey was conducted to capture the perceptions and experiences of Spanish society regarding menstruation with questions addressing aspects such the information received, sources of information, and emotions experienced during menarche. More than 4000 answers were collected by people aged 14 to 80, both people who will/do/have previously menstruate/d and those who do not menstruate. Typeform was used as a digital platform to gather the data. Qualitative data were analyzed with NVivo software while descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted with SPSS software. Many participants reported not having received enough information on menstruation prior to menarche, particularly on how to physically manage it. Besides, negative emotions like shame, worry, and fear were often used to describe their first menstruation; a fact that did not change between generations. Interestingly, we observed an increase in stress and sadness with an increase in perceived knowledge of the reproductive role of menstruation. We observed a reduction in negative emotions when the respondents perceived they had sufficient information on how to manage their first bleeding. Better menstrual health literacy can improve how periods are experienced; therefore, it is advised to integrate menstrual education into school curricula beyond reproductive biology, including practical management of periods. Menstrual education of everyone, including those who do not menstruate - can improve how periods are experienced in Spain.

## The filmic-fluid body: Menstrual aesthetics in Barbara's Hammer films (1968-2015)

Miriam Sánchez-Manzano

Pompeu Fabra University, Spain

Barbara Hammer is a crucial figure in queer and feminist experimental cinema, with a career spanning nearly fifty years and more than eighty audiovisual and performance works. Besides this, she also should be remembered as a pioneer of menstrual body representation in cinema. Her films are evidence of a fluid body in itself, either through putting it on the frame or pushing the boundaries of the medium (dripping, stains, and splashes on the celluloid or video).



This corporeal materiality in her movies makes the separation between filmed-body (image) and filmic-body (device) indivisible. Hammer has theorized this under the "invisible-screen" concept: The camera is the body itself. Within this theoretical framework, this research aims to analyze Hammer's films (from the first in 1968 to the last in 2015) to study how this body-gaze over the images establishes a menstrual aesthetic in cinema. On the one hand, this aesthetic would question the hegemonic and patriarchal audiovisual language (the division between the object-is-looked and the subject-who-looks) and, on the other hand, it would decensor corporalities traditionally reduced to oppression and invisibility on-screen. Thus, Hammer's films manifest a fluid body politics, a sample of physical, carnal, sexual, menstrual, and material identity. An identity that is collective and shows multiple fluid bodily experiences in motion.

## Chrysalis: A Multi-Media Reflection on Global Menstrual Health Research

**Katarina Schneiderman, Mentor: Sara Baumann**

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*University of Pittsburgh, US*

Chrysalis as an art piece is both an interstice into myself and a reflection on my time immersed in participatory, mixed-methods research centered on Nepali women and their centuries-old menstrual traditions. I could say much about my research, but in short: I found for my participants navigating reproductive health decision-making was (and is) thoroughly individual, and intensely contextual. In watercolor and ink, I've shown a chhaupadi goth, the makeshift dwelling to which menstruating individuals have historically been banished to. The hut, and its representation of the activities women might be kept from, is intentionally ill-defined, as most things rooted in stigma are. Red rhododendron arboreum, Nepal's national flower, blooms from my subject's chest and spills from between her legs. In Nepali symbolism, red represents bravery; blood and flowers are my nod to reproductive vitality. The grey layers of the chrysalis pulled back are reminiscent of the folded cotton sheets individuals described using during menstrual cycles of their adolescence. Moving right to left the chrysalis unfurls, the hair unwinds, the chin lifts and eyes raise, the red tangled thread of being a being that bleeds loosens. The menstruator steps from the restricted space of shame, confusion, and perceived pollution into an acceptance of body's blood as a part of themselves. Just as seemingly fragile Lepidoptera migrate, I've caught myself musing over my participant interviews, "Well of course, shouldn't it be intuitive? Major changes can sometimes take generations." All the women that contributed to my projects were pursuing a far-off destination through generational effort. An end to injustice, women's safety, inclusion, and access to opportunities. The chrysalis: a symbol of every woman on her journey of what agency and identity means, of what role menstruation should have in her life, and what self-assurance might look like.

# Trans, Nonbinary, and Genderqueer Menstruation Related to Self-Objectification and Menstrual Cup Attitudes

Emma Shay & Kate Richmond

Muhlenberg College, US

Through self-objectification, individuals view themselves as entities to be assessed based on appearance and then conform to social or cultural norms as closely as possible (Grose & Grabe, 2014). This mindset also applies to menstruation management. Among cisgender women, a link was found between higher self-objectification and negative reactions to the menstrual cup—a reusable menstrual product that requires vaginal contact (Grose & Grabe 2014). They found menstruating cis women to prefer items that preserve distance from their menstruation rather than requiring them to contact their genitals and menses. For non-women menstruators, the menstrual cup can contribute to gender dysphoria – the feeling that one's body does not reflect one's gender identity (Chrisler et al., 2016). However, cups and other reusable, long-lasting products can help avoid instances of gender dysphoria by limiting the need to change products in public settings (Chrisler et al., 2016).

This study builds on the Gross & Grabe (2014) study, instead including one hundred genderqueer participants who were surveyed to assess their level of self-objectification and gender dysphoria, attitudes toward menstruation, and awareness and willingness to use a menstrual cup. Data collection is currently ongoing, but I anticipate results will likely replicate the same pattern as found in Gross & Gabe, 2014; however, a moderating factor will be level of gender dysphoria. Results will be discussed in terms of self-objectification theory as it relates to the menstruating body.

## Education as an equalizer: Assessing the impact of resources for menstruation in addressing menstrual discrimination in Nepal

BK Shestha<sup>①</sup>, Sara Parker<sup>②</sup>, Angela Daly, Kishor Shrestha and Shreekrishna Weinju

<sup>①</sup>Global Action Nepal; <sup>②</sup>Liverpool John Moores University, UK

In Nepal menstruation is often viewed as a time of 'impurity' and results in wide ranging discriminatory beliefs and practices that vary according to intersecting factors such as ethnicity, caste, religious beliefs, geographical locations and levels of education. Women and girls are often treated as being untouchable during the menstruation time. Education plays a key role in dispelling myths about menstruation and impurity but often people are confined by social-cultural norms that are deeply rooted in society. They are denied their sexual and reproductive rights and such discrimination needs to be challenged. Education is central to addressing discriminatory practices however our research has found that in the context of Nepal the majority of school teachers are embarrassed to teach menstruation and lack basic sexual and reproductive health knowledge. Acknowledging the period is political and embracing an interdisciplinary, feminist approach to research and advocacy, Global Action Nepal worked with the Dignity Without Danger team, Menstrual Health and Hygiene Partners' Alliance (MHMPA),



GiZ and Curriculum Development Center (CDC) to develop and pilot a set of 'Resources for Menstruation Education' (R4ME). This collaborative initiative engaged civil society organizations I/NGOs working in menstruation such as CDC, Health Training Center, Government Ministries including Ministry of Health and Education, researchers, teachers and curriculum experts and supports the revised national curriculum on menstruation.

Resources were piloted in 29 schools in four geographical regions in Nepal. This presentation will draw on follow on interviews, observation and focus group discussions of these schools to assess the impact and effectiveness of the R4ME in empowering teachers to teach their students about menstruation and for the students and wider society to address menstrual discrimination.

The presentation showcases examples of good practice, highlights opportunities and challenges and explores how these can be applied at all levels promote menstrual justice for all.

## Situating the female body: clinical and everyday distinctions

**Mie Kusk Søndergaard<sup>①</sup>, Rikke Sand Andersen, Dorte Ejg Jarbøl and Sara Marie Hebsgaard Offersen**

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<sup>①</sup>*University of Southern Denmark, Denmark*

Research shows that many women do not seek care for gynecological disturbances such as intercycle spotting or pain with intercourse. Both social and medical sciences have pointed at taboos or embarrassment to explain hesitation around healthcare seeking relating to the reproductive organs. It is suggested that (cis)women are embarrassed to discuss gynecological concerns with healthcare professionals, especially male ones.

Departing in prolonged fieldwork in Denmark, this paper discusses clinical encounters for gynecological problems. The fieldwork included participant observations of consultations about and examinations of gynecological symptoms by both male and female doctors in general practice clinics for 4,5 months, observations of everyday life in 6 key informants' homes over 4-6 months, interviews with 11 gynecological cancer patients, and interviews with 25 women experiencing gynecological disturbances.

Our preliminary analysis shows that conversations around gynecological disturbances unfold in relatively unproblematic ways within clinical encounters, and embarrassment seems to be more present in everyday life than in the clinic. In order to explore how and why gynecological disturbances are tinged with different sorts and levels of embarrassment, we draw on Mary Douglas' theory of matter out of place (1961). Matter out of place describes how things, which are not in the place they belong, elicit psychological dissonance which results in disgust. We suggest that gynecological sensations are matter out of place in everyday life, but not in clinical encounters. On the contrary, general practice can be seen as a specific kind of place where gynecological sensations belong, and in this paper we point to how actions and the environment in general practice creates a place of belonging for otherwise hidden sensations.

The research has potential implications for future research. We suggest that expressing embarrassment about healthcare seeking for gynecological problems in interviews cannot necessarily be taken to reflect what happens within clinical encounters.

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Within the Menstrual Equity and Period Poverty Movements: An Interview Study

Noelle Elizabeth Spencer<sup>①</sup>, Stacy Bartlett and Malavika Eby

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<sup>①</sup>*University of Pittsburgh, US*

**Introduction/Objectives:** To understand what is needed to continue to build a more inclusive and impactful menstrual advocacy and activism landscape, it is important to explore current, and potential future, landscapes. This study was designed around the question, 'to what extent is diversity and inclusion represented and addressed in organizations that promote menstrual equity and alleviation of period poverty?'

**Methods:** Virtual semi-structured qualitative key stakeholder interviews were conducted. The diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) interview guide was included within the interview guide of a larger study. Exploring two study aims through a single interview decreased participant burden. Participants were asked to discuss DEI efforts in the context of the menstrual equity and period poverty movements. An initial codebook was developed using the interview guide and updated iteratively. The finalized 26-code codebook included three DEI-specific qualitative codes applied in combination with the full codebook. Three researchers thematically double-coded the interviews. An additional five sub-codes were added by the PI following this double-coding and applied to the interviews.

**Results:** Thirty-three of 35 interviews conducted as part of the larger interview study included responses to the DEI interview guide. The major themes included (1) the role of DEI in menstrual equity and period poverty movements, including a sub-theme of opportunities to increase and improve DEI efforts, (2) discussion of how DEI has been addressed in existing period poverty and menstrual equity organizations, and (3) barriers and facilitators to increasing DEI in those organizations and spaces.

**Implications:** Participants reported diverse experiences with DEI efforts within their organizations and organizations that they have interacted with, including negative and positive outcomes, and barriers and facilitators to existing and future efforts. These insights into current and potential DEI work by key stakeholders, in their own words, are a unique contribution to the field.

# The Role of Policy in Advancing Discussion and Change Around Menstrual Equity and Period Poverty: A Concept Mapping Study

Noelle Elizabeth Spencer & Malavika Eby

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*University of Pittsburgh, US*

**Introduction/Objectives:** Through collaborative community-based methods and framework of the social-ecological model,<sup>1,2</sup> this research study explored the question: 'what role can policy play in advancing discussions and change around menstrual equity and period poverty?'



**Methods:** Concept mapping is a multi-stage collaborative, community-based participatory qualitative research methodology that incorporates quantitative components.<sup>3,4</sup> We conducted three virtual concept mapping activities, (1) brainstorming, (2) sorting and rating, and (3) group interpretation sessions. During brainstorming, participants contributed community, institutional and national level initiatives, strategies, programs, or policies, that could address menstrual equity and alleviate period poverty. During sorting and rating, participants sorted initiatives into distinct groups with unique titles and rated how realistic each initiative was to address, and how important each initiative was to implement. The participant-generated data was used to generate maps (point, cluster, cluster rating and point rating), and plots (pattern match and go-zone), by and through the concept mapping software groupwisdom<sup>©</sup>.<sup>5,6</sup> During interpretation sessions, participants discussed these results.

**Results:** During brainstorming, 33 participants contributed 129 statements. Following data cleaning for repetition, 112 statements were sorted and rated by 33 participants. The research team selected the nine-cluster solution: (1) Menstrual Education and Public Enlightenment, (2) Menstrual Health Education, (3) Medical/Clinic Involvement, (4) Product Distribution/Supplies, (5) Inclusive and Free Access, (6) Community Initiatives, (7) Menstrual Advocacy and Outreach, (8) Funding, (9) Government Policy. During six interpretation sessions, 34 participants discussed the generated maps and plots, perceived gaps, and the role of policy in advancing discussions and change around menstrual equity and period poverty.

**Implications:** This study is the first of its kind to explore policy initiatives to address menstrual equity and alleviate period poverty using concept mapping. The use of concept mapping to co-create a list of initiatives that were then sorted, rated, and prioritized is a unique contribution to the field.

## Exploring the Organizations and Advocates within the Menstrual Equity and Period Poverty Movements: An Interview Study

Noelle Elizabeth Spencer<sup>①</sup>, Malavika Eby and Stacy Bartlett

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<sup>①</sup>University of Pittsburgh, US

**Introduction/Objectives:** The movements to advance menstrual equity and alleviate period poverty are two key menstrual health movements, advocating for equitable menstrual health experiences and outcomes for women, girls, and people who menstruate.<sup>1,2</sup> Movements cannot make progress without the investment and perseverance of dedicated individuals and organizations. This research study was designed around the question, 'who are the advocates/organizations promoting menstrual equity and awareness of period poverty?' The main objective was to better understand the landscape of menstrual activism, menstrual advocacy, and organizations that focus on menstrual equity and period poverty.



**Methods:** We conducted virtual 45-60 minute in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with individuals, employees, members or volunteers within a larger organization promoting menstrual equity and/or awareness of period poverty through research, advocacy, and/or activism. Interviews were divided into three main sections: (1) introductory questions, (2) participants' involvement, and (3) diversity, equity, and inclusion. The methods and results of section three are included in a separate paper. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. An initial codebook was developed using the interview guide and updated iteratively. A team of three researchers thematically double-coded the interviews.

**Results:** Thirty-five interviews were conducted and analyzed. The major themes of the interviews included (1) participants' baseline understanding of, and engagement with menstrual equity and period poverty, (2) perceptions of advocacy and activism, (3) individual and organizational involvement, and (4) perceived gaps in the current work and landscape of menstrual equity and period poverty.

**Implications:** Participants in this research study discussed their individual understanding of and involvement with, period poverty and menstrual equity, including the areas in which menstrual equity and period poverty as movements can most improve. The viewpoints of these individuals and organizations who are working on menstrual equity and period poverty are integral to understanding areas of strength and opportunities for growth within these movements.

## Creating a Foundation for Standardized Documentation of Adolescents' Experiences of Menstruation in Medical Charts

Adele Stewart<sup>①</sup>, Stacy Carr, Ryan Davies, Yameika Head, Nancy Sokkary,  
Arin Swerlick, Melanie Vega, Megan Harrison, Sandra Reed and Andrea  
Swartzendruber

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<sup>①</sup>Emory University, US

**Background:** Georgia STOMP is a 501c3 coalition advocating to expand menstrual equity and eliminate period poverty in Georgia. Some coalition advocates – in particular, Black advocates – report lifelong frustration with the failure of healthcare providers to investigate symptoms of abnormal uterine bleeding (AUB). A review of the literature identified a lack of widely adopted, standardized AUB assessment tools for use in adolescent populations. This project created an index to document adolescents' experiences of menstruation in a clinical setting, leveraging data standardization principles of evidence-based decision making and the Delphi Technique, while considering the data privacy concerns of documenting reproductive health information.

**Method:** Nine subject matter experts who treat menstruators in various settings in North America worked towards consensus on the questionnaire using the Delphi Technique.

**Results:** The resulting 13-question index assesses themes of menarche, duration, regularity, symptoms, treatment for pain, volume of menses, activities of daily living and product access. Shame and stigma were major factors considered when developing the index questions and answers, especially those relating to the social or emotional aspects of menstruation. Additionally, some clinical indicators required multiple assessment questions, and are complicated by inadequate menstrual product regulation and a lack of standardization.

**Implications:** Index validation, standardization and translation are necessary for to assure fidelity across applications and care settings. Simultaneously, the anti-reproductive health environment and new American requirements on data sharing necessitate consideration of the unintended consequences of documenting menstruation.

## Menstrual Confidence in Post-Secondary Institutions

Abigail Suleman

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*University of Illinois Chicago, US*

**Background:** Menstrual inequity exists as an intersectional oppression that provides wealthier, Whiter menstruators with better menstrual and reproductive health knowledge, resources, and outcomes. Recent national data demonstrates that 1 in 4 menstruating teenage students reported missing class due to lack of access to menstrual products, a critical indicator of period poverty. Period poverty affects college-age Black and Latina women at a higher rate than their counterparts. Largely understudied are the needs of students with historically-marginalized intersectional identities. This study hypothesizes that minority students experience higher rates of period-related class disruption and difficulty managing their menses on campus compared to at home.

**Methods:** A large observational cross-sectional survey was conducted on students' attitudes, needs, experiences and recommendations related to menstruation on campus. It was provided to undergraduate and graduate students older than 18 years old and enrolled in a public university. This study was limited to participants that had reported a period in the last 12 months. Descriptive frequencies were calculated, and bivariate regression analyses were performed using SAS version 9.4.

**Results:** Preliminary findings ( $n= 99$ ) demonstrate that almost half of menstruators feel less confident managing their period while on campus and half have experienced class disruptions due to their period. Approximately 45.00% ranked their confidence on campus between 1-3, (1-Not at All Confident; 5-Completely Confident), compared to only 1.25% feeling neutral (3) about managing their period at home. The bivariate analyses between race-gender intersectional identity and the two primary outcomes are currently being studied.

**Implications:** Incorporating intersectionality in menstrual research may offer additional insights on how to better research menstruators. There is a gap for post-secondary institutions to support their students in feeling healthy and confident during their menstrual cycle.

# Understanding the use and influence of menstrual cycle tracking and menstrual health education apps among girls: An ethnographic study in Bali, Indonesia

Heather Amy Suttor<sup>①</sup>, Putri Yamayanti<sup>1</sup>, Tungga Dewi<sup>②</sup>, Eka Purni<sup>③</sup>, Julie Hennegan<sup>④</sup> & Richard Chenhall<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>①</sup>University of Melbourne, Australia; <sup>②</sup>Perfect Fit, Indonesia; <sup>③</sup>Kisara/IPPF, Bali; <sup>④</sup>Burnet Institute, Australia

Numerous studies suggest that girls in low- and middle-income countries do not receive adequate information on the menstrual cycle at the time of, or before menarche and have limited menstrual literacy during their early menstrual years (Chandra-Mouli & Patel, 2017; Hennegan et al., 2019; K. Holmes et al., 2021). For young people who menstruate in Indonesia, menstrual tracking apps, such as UNICEF's Oky App, have the potential to address this knowledge gap by offering an accessible and novel approach to menstrual tracking and menstrual health education.

However, there is limited knowledge of the use and influence of such tools beyond user-testing groups and metrics such as downloads. Furthermore, few studies explore the digital menstrual experiences of young people in low and middle-income settings. To address this gap, this study seeks to answer: How does the Oky App influence the menstrual experience of girls?

Data collection is currently in progress, using qualitative methods of group discussions, diaries, interviews, and participant observation. Participants include girls between the ages of 12 and 15 (both Oky App users and non-users) and community members in Bali (Indonesia), as well as stakeholders associated with the development and implementation of the Oky App globally. This presentation will discuss the methods and preliminary findings of the research.

## Attitudes on Sterilization and Racial and Age Biases

Kay Tari & Kate Richmond

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Muhlenberg College, US

The United States has a long history of prejudice and discrimination within the medical field (Stern, 2020). Women specifically were expected to fit into specific expectations for pregnancy and motherhood, yet their reproductive experiences were different. Women of color were often sterilized without proper consent (Stern, 2020). White women, however, were typically seen as less ready to decide on personal sterilization and were dissuaded from seeking sterilization services. Evidence suggests that these trends continue in the modern era (CDC, 2012). This study is exploratory and meant to understand the role of racial prejudice and ageism on perceptions of women's reproductive rights within the United States. One hundred participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (3X2 design) in which the race (Black, Latinx, and White) and age (26 and 35) varied, but the description of a woman seeking sterilization remained the same. After reading the vignette, participants answered a series of questions assessing their attitudes toward reproductive choices and their perception of the woman. The research was driven by the following hypotheses: participants will perceive white and young women as being poor candidates for sterilization, in contrast to people of color and older women. Results will be discussed using feminist and critical race theory and recommendations will be offered on how to shift attitudes.

# The Impact of the Online Menstrual Movement on teenagers' attitudes towards menstruation: Reducing Stigma and Inspiring Offline Micro-Activism

Maria Kathryn Tomlinson

*University of Sheffield, UK*

Traditionally, menstruation is a topic that has been stigmatized, overlooked, and surrounded by misinformation. The menstrual movement in the United Kingdom, which has become increasingly visible on social media since 2015, has long strived to destigmatize menstruation, tackle the social inequalities that are experienced by menstruating women and people, and fill gaps in the menstrual health education that is provided at British schools. Today, activists are using social media to normalize open conversations about menstruation as well as raise awareness of related health and social issues, including period poverty, endometriosis, and the environmental impact of plastic products. Drawing on focus groups that I conducted with 77 male, female, and non-binary teenagers in Yorkshire, this paper explores the impact of the online menstrual movement on young people's knowledge and perceptions of menstruation. My results demonstrate that, by normalizing menstruation as an everyday topic of conversation, the online movement has reduced stigma amongst teenagers. As my focus groups revealed, this movement has also provided a social perspective on menstruation that is lacking from the biologically focused school curriculum. Furthermore, my findings indicate that the menstrual movement has successfully politicized young people. For example, it has inspired them to carry out small acts of 'offline micro-activism' such as deliberately discussing menstruation in mixed gender groups (including with teachers, male friends, and male family members). By introducing the concept of 'offline micro-activism', this paper calls for a rethinking of traditional understandings of activism and its impact. As the last major study of teenagers' attitudes towards menstruation was conducted prior to 2015, this research offers the very first insight into the impact of social media and mediated menstrual activism on young British people.

## Worlding possibilities with young menstruants: Feminist new materialist pedagogies

Lise Ulrik Andreasen

*Aarhus University, Denmark*

With an outset in data from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2017-2019, this paper discusses how critical menstrual pedagogies can be developed through a feminist new materialist (FNM) approach. The worlding of the research project in question was carried out with young menstruants (12-14 years old) situated in a white, upper middle-class suburb of Copenhagen, Denmark, and found how providing a space for being with menstruation, created multiple possibilities for knowing about menstruation in new and affirmative ways. Through the last

decades FNM has entered the fields of pedagogy, children, and youth studies, and exciting new research has, through creative methodologies, captured the importance of bodies, affective flows and materialities (1) for education and pedagogy. Despite the alignment of attention to gender, bodies and materialities with menstrual material ontologies, FNM has however yet to become a common theoretical choice for critical menstruation studies (2). Thinking with Haraway's (3) concept of 'worlding' and the idea that change is not something out there to be found, but an emergent phenomenon that unfolds as we explore it (4), the paper suggests FNM methodologies with which to think about menstruation and pedagogy as relational assemblages where working together with youth enables moving beyond discourse, where an amputated menstrual vocabulary can be limiting. Based on the above the paper suggests developing menstrual pedagogies through facilitations of creative workshops and argues how FNM methodological approaches can enable co-explorations of menstruation and make affirmative refigurations of menstruation-body-youth relations possible.

## Out with Cancer: Negotiating Cis-Heteronormative Constructions of Cancer and Cancer Care

Jane Ussher, Janette Perz, Rosalie Power and the Out with Cancer Study Team

*Western Sydney University, Australia*

**Background:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) communities are increasingly recognized as a vulnerable population in cancer care. They experience disproportionate cancer burden and unique psychosocial challenges, such as higher distress and sexual concerns, less family support, gaps in patient-provider communication and lower satisfaction with cancer care.

**Methods:** The Out with Cancer Study is a mixed-methods project involving surveys, interviews, and photo-elicitation exercises with LGBTQI patients/survivors and caregivers, across a range of LGBTQI identities and ages. 430 patients/survivors and 132 carers completed surveys, and 105 patients/survivors and 31 carers completed interviews. The project adopted an integrated knowledge translation framework, with LGBTQI and cancer community organizations, clinicians, and LGBTQI patients/survivors and carers advising on all stages of the project.

**Results:** Over 40% of LGBTQI patients/survivors and carers reported high distress, a rate 3-6 times higher than non-LGBTQI patient/survivor studies. Significantly higher distress and lower quality of life (QOL) were identified in younger, transgender, intersex, bisexual and queer participants. Distress and QOL were associated with minority stress (discrimination, discomfort in being LGBTQI, outness), impact on gender and LGBTQI identities, lack of social support, physical concerns and sexual concerns. Qualitative data provided further insights into participants' experiences of heterosexism in healthcare, and how they navigated changes in sexual and reproductive embodiment. This includes resistance to the pinkification breast cancer and rejection of cis-heteronormative constructions of sexual embodiment. For trans participants, cancer treatment served to reinforce or disrupt gender affirmation.

**Conclusion:** Despite increasing societal acceptance, LGBTQI communities continue to face disparities in psychosocial outcomes and experiences of care. Findings and translational outcomes of the Out with Cancer study will be informative in improving inclusivity and appropriateness of cancer care and support for LGBTQI people impacted by cancer. These findings also have implications for conceptualizations of reproductive health in the context of cancer.

## A Blood Alliance? Critical Reflections on Endometriosis Advocacy and the Menstrual Equity Movement

Annalise Weckesser

Birmingham City University, UK

Experiences of menstruation and endometriosis (endo) are the subject of increasing media and academic attention as well as policy intervention. In this exploratory paper, I will reflect on the ways that the menstrual equity movement and endo advocacy overlap and align. Both seek to address gender biases and menstrual stigma. Both, to varying degrees, are informed by a history of feminist praxis. And both require a shift toward intersectionality and decolonization to address the historic marginalization of those from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous People of Color) and gender diverse communities.

The paper also explores the potential unintended consequences of aligning menstruation and endo. The classic medical definition of endo is a gynecological condition linked to 'retrograde' menstruation. However, it is now classified and recognized as a systemic, inflammatory condition affecting the whole body (Hugh, et al. 2021). A convergence between menstrual equity and endometriosis awareness work could lead to the non-menstrual, non-pelvic symptoms of endometriosis being overlooked. In turn, perpetuating misconceptions about the condition that contribute to delays in diagnosis.

Further, in what ways may governing bodies operationalize the alignment of the menstrual equity movement and endometriosis advocacy? Drawing on an example from the United Kingdom, the government recently proposed subsuming , period poverty, initiatives under the Women's Health Strategy (2022), a ten-year plan heavily focused on endometriosis. Such a proposal could constrain already limited resources, leading to interventions that do not adequately meet the needs of those who menstruate and/or who have endometriosis.

In this paper, I argue that endometriosis awareness efforts have greatly benefited from the current wider menstruation movement and also that we must recognize the potential limitations of this 'blood alliance'.

### Fall River Menstrual Equity Report

Hannah Wilcove<sup>①</sup>, Sasha Goodfriend<sup>②</sup>; Charlotte Powley<sup>③</sup>; Lauren Leonardis<sup>④</sup>

<sup>①</sup>Brandeis University, US; <sup>②</sup>Mass NOW, US; <sup>③</sup>Simmons University, US; <sup>④</sup>Mother and Changemaker Consulting, US

**Background:** While period poverty is garnering increased policy attention, there is still significant work to be done; particularly within Massachusetts. The I AM bill is a state level bill in Massachusetts which seeks to increase access to menstrual products in schools, shelters, and for incarcerated individuals.



The Massachusetts chapter of the National Organization for Women (Mass NOW) works to support the I AM bill as well as on the ground distribution of period products, playing a key role in research and data collection surrounding the needs of menstruators in Massachusetts.

**Methods:** In the spring and summer of 2022, Mass NOW engaged in the Fall River project, which included surveys, focus groups, trainings on menstruation, and the distribution of period products. The goal of the project was to learn best practices for ending period poverty via product distribution in schools, shelters, and community organizations serving people living in/near poverty. Multiple surveys were administered including a "Menstrual Product Distributor" survey which included participants such as the Boys & Girls Club of Fall River, Citizens for Citizens Family Planning, Steppingstone Inc., Department of Children and Families: Fall River Area Office. Results: 100% of participants reported that they had been asked for menstrual products by someone in need. Focus groups were also conducted amongst adults in Fall River which revealed that there was a general preference for pads out of all menstrual product options, though individuals voiced a curiosity to learn more about their cycles and available products. Connections with peers and fellow menstruators was another theme that emerged from the focus group data.

**Discussion:** These findings are critical for policy advocacy as well as future implementation methods.

## From Old Wives' Tales to Digital Trackers; the shifting social imaginaries of menstruation in Ireland

Harriet Wilkinson

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*Maynooth University, Ireland*

Menstruation, previously a hidden and 'unspeakable' physiological process has become a topic of cultural interest and political activism evident in recent campaigns on period poverty. Until recently, coping with the menstrual cycle has been highly individualized, falling within the remit of medical advice, limited educational interventions or commercial interests including digital tracking technologies. However, to date there have been no sociological studies of menstrual 'management' in Ireland, that demonstrate how the process of menstruation is socially constructed, culturally framed, politically situated, and ultimately lived as a specific physiological experience that resonates across the life course. This paper details my PhD to date-outlining how it uses qualitative methods to discover how menstruation is navigated across and between generations of people who menstruate.

Drawing on a diverse intergenerational sample that centres menstruators accounts, this research investigates often unspoken and informal social practices of menstrual 'management' passed down through kinship and peer networks. Menstrual management is understood as operating on three levels: at the subjective micro level of individual management, the meso level of kinship and peer dynamics and at the macro level of cultural, institutional, and commercial framings including technological management.

These levels interact to produce a particular social imaginary, a set of values, institutions, and symbols through which menstruation is experienced, regulated, commodified, digitized and contested. This paper will provide a contextualizing framework that maps shifts in medical advice, cultural representations around menstruation and actors/interests mobilizing on menstrual inequity and stigma. Menstruation will be situated in the terrain of everyday experiences to assess it as a site of stigma but also of resistance. The aim is to understand it within broader processes of gendered social change. This paper reveals important insights into the subjective experiences of reproductive health and societal understandings of menstruation, enriching and informing the socio-medical field of practice.

## Human Rights in the Menstrual Movement: Reductionism and Renewed Potential from Below

Inga Winkler

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*Central European University, Hungry*

Menstruation matters for the realization of human rights. Menstrual stigma has profound effects on the rights to health, education, work, participation in public life, among others. As menstruation is gaining increasing attention, the language of human rights looms large in the expanding discourse on menstruation. This framing and the promises, pitfalls, and the renewed potential of human rights have yet to be explored: Why do movements adopt this framing? What is their understanding of human rights?

The paper is based on an analysis of official documents, online sources and interviews with relevant stakeholders. Initial findings indicate that many global organizations adopt a reductionist understanding of human rights. They use the frame of dignity, but present it in a narrow sense of ensuring privacy and cleanliness, eschewing a more fundamental understanding of dignity as agency and autonomy. They address the socio-cultural dimension of menstruation, but only present culture as restriction and barrier to the realization of human rights, which seems to be driven by Western liberalist understandings. They instrumentalize human rights to advance narrow, technical fixes in the form of menstrual products and hygiene interventions. As a result, these framings risk leaving menstrual stigma and its role in perpetuating gender injustices unaddressed.

However, the menstrual movement is not monolithic, and initial findings also point to the social construction of human rights from below. Many grassroots movements see the emancipatory promise of human rights and build on a holistic understanding to advance menstrual justice. The paper is situated in the context of critiques of the human rights 'enterprise' and a feminist re-envisioning of human rights (from below) to address gender injustices. Against this background, the paper explores how to avoid shortchanging human rights and to discuss their renewed potential for the menstrual movement centered on the notions of agency, equality, and accountability.

# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## BREAKFAST OPTIONS

NOTE: The Society for Menstrual Cycle Research is not recommending or endorsing any specific businesses. SMCR is also not responsible for changes in prices from the estimates available to us at the time this information was compiled. We are merely trying to offer options to conference attendees that they can further research on their own to make informed choices

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### TATTE BAKERY & CAFE

- Distance From Hotel: 3-minute walk
  - Hours: 7 am - 8 pm Monday to Saturday, 8 am - 7 pm Sunday
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$9-\$14
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards or online order
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### PAUL FRENCH BAKERY & CAFE

- Distance From Hotel: 8-minute walk
  - Hours: 7:30 am - 7:30 pm Monday to Sunday
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$7-\$12
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards and Android Pay
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### JOE AND THE JUICE

- Distance From Hotel: 7-minute walk
  - Hours: 7 am - 8 pm Monday to Friday, 8 am - 8 pm Saturday & Sunday
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$10-\$12
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### SILVER

- Distance From Hotel: 8-minute walk
  - Hours: 7 am - 11 pm Monday to Thursday, 7 am - 12 pm Friday & Saturday, 7 am - 11 pm Sunday
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$15-\$20
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### BROWN BAG

- Distance From Hotel: 1-minute walk
  - Hours: 7:30 am – 2:30 pm Monday to Friday, closed Saturday & Sunday
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$15-\$20
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards
-

# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## BREAKFAST OPTIONS

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### JEAN'S DELI

- Distance From Hotel: 4-minute walk
  - Hours: 7 am – 4 pm Monday to Friday, closed Saturday& Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: No
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$5-\$13
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards
  - \*Very loud
- 

### OLIVA'S KITCHEN [MEXICAN FUSION]

- Distance From Hotel: 9-minute walk
  - Hours: 8 am– 4 pm Monday to Friday, 8 am – 4 pm Saturday, closed Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$10-\$12.5
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
  - Payment: Credit Card
- 

### QUARTERMAINE COFFEE ROASTERS

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
  - Hours: 6 am – 6 pm Monday to Thursday& Sunday, 6 am – 7 pm Friday& Saturday
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: Coffee \$5, Smoothie \$7, beans \$18
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
  - Payment: Credit Cards and Android Pay
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### TERRAIN CAFÉ

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
  - Hours: 11 am– 8 pm Wednesday to Friday, 9 am – 4 pm Saturday& Sunday, closed Monday& Tuesday.
  - Outdoor Seating: No
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$17-\$20
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation available
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### 7501 CAFÉ

- Distance From Hotel: 3-minute walk
  - Hours: 7 am– 4 pm Monday to Friday, closed Saturday& Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$5.59 ½ sandwich & soup combo
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards
  - \*Loud
- 



# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## BREAKFAST OPTIONS

### PUREE ARTISAN JUICE BAR

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 9 am– 8 pm Monday to Saturday, 9 am – 5 pm Sunday.
- Typical Entrée Price: shake \$11, juice \$12
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
- Payment: Credit Cards& Apple Pay
- \*Loud

### TROPICAL SMOOTHIE CAFÉ

- Distance From Hotel: 3-minute walk
- Hours: 7 am– 9 pm Monday to Friday, 8 am – 9 pm Saturday, 10 am – 8 pm Sunday
- Outdoor Seating: Yes
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
- Payment: Credit Cards

### BETHESDA BAGELS

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 7 am– 3 pm Monday to Sunday.
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$5-\$7
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
- Payment: Credit Cards& Apple Pay

## LUNCH/ DINNER OPTIONS

### MORTON'S THE STEAKHOUSE [AT THE HOTEL; AMERICAN STEAKHOUSE]

- Hours: 4 pm - 10 pm Tuesday to Saturday, 4 pm - 9 pm Monday& Sunday
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$50-\$70
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation & online order available
- Payment: Credit Cards
- \*Many vegetarian options

### SPANISH DINER [CELEBRITY CHEF JOSE ANDRES]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 11 am - 10 pm Monday to Friday, 10 am - 10 pm Saturday, 10 am - 9 pm Sunday
- Outdoor Seating: Yes
- Typical Entrée Price: \$15-\$25
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation Needed
- Payment: Credit Cards



# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## LUNCH/ DINNER OPTIONS

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### CHERCHER [ETHIOPIAN CUISINE]

- Distance From Hotel: 11-minute walk
  - Hours: 4 pm - 10 pm Monday to Thursday, 12 pm - 10 pm Friday to Sunday
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$20
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards
  - \*Vegan Options
- 

### MON AMI GABI [ETHIOPIAN CUISINE]

- Distance From Hotel: 7-minute walk
  - Hours: 11:30 am - 9 pm Monday to Friday, 11:30 am - 10 pm Friday to Saturday, 9 am - 9 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$25-\$35
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation Recommended
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### RAKU [PAN ASIAN]

- Distance From Hotel: 7-minute walk
  - Hours: 11:30 am – 2:30 pm/ 4:30 pm -9 pm Monday to Thursday, 11:30 am – 2:30 pm/ 4:30 pm – 10 pm Friday, 12 pm – 3 pm/ 5 pm – 10 pm Saturday, 12 pm – 3 pm/ 5 pm – 9 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$25-\$35
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation Recommended
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### GRINGOS & MARIACHIS [MEXICAN STREET FARE]

- Distance From Hotel: 10-minute walk
  - Hours: 11:30 am – 9:30 pm Monday to Wednesday, 11:30 am – 10 pm Thursday, 11:30 am – 11 pm Friday& Saturday, 11:30 am – 9:30 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$13-\$16
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### BLACK'S BAR & KITCHEN [SEAFOOD]

- Distance From Hotel: 7-minute walk
  - Hours: 12 pm – 9 pm Monday to Thursday, 12 pm – 10 pm Friday& Saturday, 12 pm – 10 pm Friday& Saturday, 11 am – 3:30 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$30-\$35
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation Recommended
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 



# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## LUNCH/ DINNER OPTIONS

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### PLANTA [VEGAN]

- Distance From Hotel: 7-minute walk
  - Hours: 11:30 am – 9:30 pm Monday to Friday, 11 am – 10 pm Saturday& Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$15-\$23
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation Recommended
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### Q BY PETER CHANG [CELEBRITY CHEF PETER CHANG]

- Distance From Hotel: 5-minute walk
  - Hours: 11 am – 3 pm/ 5 pm – 9:30 pm Monday to Thursday, 11 am – 10:30 pm Friday& Saturday, 11 am – 9 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$10-\$20
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation Needed
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### WOODMONT GRILL [AMERICAN FOOD]

- Distance From Hotel: 7-minute walk
  - Hours: 11:30 am – 11 pm Monday to Thursday, 11:30 am – 9 pm Friday, 12 am – 9 pm Saturday& Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: No
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$20-\$50
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation Recommended
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### MEDIUM RARE [STEAK, FRENCH FRIES, SALAD]

- Distance From Hotel: 8-minute walk
  - Hours: 5 pm– 10 pm Monday to Thursday, 5 pm – 11 pm Friday, 10:30 pm – 11 pm Saturday, 10:30 pm – 10 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: No
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$30
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation available, but not required.
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### HIP FLASK ROOFTOP [AT MARRIOT HQ]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
  - Hours: closed Monday & Sunday, 5 pm – 11 pm Tuesday& Thursday, 5 pm – 12 am Friday& Saturday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: Weekend Brunch \$100 per person (20% gratuity with applicable taxes)
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Unknown
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 



# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## LUNCH/ DINNER OPTIONS

### MAYA CUISINE [INDIAN/ NEPALESE FOOD]

- Distance From Hotel: 3-minute walk
- Hours: 11:30 pm – 2:30 pm/ 5 pm to 9:30 pm Monday to Sunday.
- Outdoor Seating: Yes
- Typical Entrée Price: \$15-\$20
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in/ online order
- Payment: Credit Cards

### CORELLA CAFÉ & LOUNGE

- Distance From Hotel: 3-minute walk
- Hours: Breakfast: 6:30 am to 10 am Monday to Friday, 7 am to 10:30 am Saturday & Sunday; Lunch: Daily 11 am to 2 pm; Dinner: 4 pm to 11:30 pm Sunday through Thursday, 4 pm to Midnight Friday& Saturday; Happy Hour: Daily 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm
- Outdoor Seating: Yes
- Typical Entrée Price: \$14-\$30
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation available, but not required.
- Payment: Credit Cards

### BITE OF ASIA [AMERICAN FOOD]

- Distance From Hotel: 4-minute walk
- Hours: 11 am – 9 pm Monday to Saturday, closed Sunday.
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$10-\$20
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation available, but not required. Online order available.
- Payment: Credit Cards

### SEVENTH STATE RESTAURANT AND LOUNGE [AT MARRIOT HQ]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 6:30 am – 11 am/ 11 am – 3pm Monday to Friday, 7 am – 3 pm/ 5 pm – 10 pm Saturday& Sunday.
- Outdoor Seating: Yes
- Typical Entrée Price: \$75 per guest
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation available
- Payment: Credit Cards

### TIKKA MASALA [INDIAN]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 12 pm – 9 pm Monday to Saturday, 12 pm – 8:30 pm Sunday.
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$12-\$17
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation & online order available
- Payment: Credit Cards



# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## LUNCH/ DINNER OPTIONS

### RAKUGAKI [JAPANESE]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 11 am – 3 pm/ 4:30 pm – 9 pm Tuesday to Sunday, closed Monday.
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$15-\$25
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation available
- Payment: Credit Cards

### DELHI SPICE [INDIAN]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 11:30 am – 9:30 pm Monday to Sunday.
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$17
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation available
- Payment: Credit Cards

### TAKO GRILL [JAPANESE]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 11:30 am – 2 pm/ 4:30 pm – 8 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 11:30 am – 2 pm/ 4:30 pm – 8:30 pm Thursday& Friday, 4:30 pm – 8:30 pm Saturday, 4:30 pm – 8 pm Sunday, closed Monday.
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$15-\$22
- Payment: Credit Cards
- \*Many vegetarian options
- \*take-out only

### MAMMA LUCIA [ITALIAN, PIZZA]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 11 am – 9 pm Monday to Thursday & Sunday, 11 am – 10 pm Friday& Saturday.
- Outdoor Seating: Yes
- Typical Entrée Price: \$13-20
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Reservation& online order available
- Payment: Credit Cards

### TACOMBI [MEXICAN]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
- Hours: 11 am– 11 pm Tuesday to Saturday, 11 am – 10 pm Monday& Sunday.
- Outdoor Seating: Yes
- Typical Entrée Price: \$12
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
- Payment: Credit Cards& Apple Pay



# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## LUNCH/ DINNER OPTIONS

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### LUKE'S LOBSTER

BETHESDA

[AMERICAN, SEAFOOD]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
  - Hours: 11 am– 8 pm Monday to Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$10 for 12oz Clam Chowder
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
  - Payment: Credit Cards& Apple Pay
- 

### MATCHBOX

[AMERICAN]

- Distance From Hotel: 9-minute walk
  - Hours: 11 am– 9 pm Monday to Thursday& Sunday, 11 am – 10 pm Friday& Saturday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$17-\$23
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### RICE PADDIES GRILL

[VIETNAMESE]

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
  - Hours: 11 am– 8:30 pm Monday to Friday, 12 pm – 8:30 pm Saturday& Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$13-\$15
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### THE PERFECT PITA

[GREEK]

- Distance From Hotel: 3-minute walk
  - Hours: 7 pm – 5 pm Monday to Friday, closed Saturday& Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$9
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 

### TAYLOR GOURMET

- Distance From Hotel: 6-minute walk
  - Hours: 11 am – 3 pm Monday to Friday, closed Saturday& Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$13
  - Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
  - Payment: Credit Cards
- 



# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## LUNCH/ DINNER OPTIONS

### TASTEE DINER [AMERICAN]

- Distance From Hotel: 9-minute walk
- Hours: 6 am – 10 pm every day.
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$9-\$14
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
- Payment: Credit Cards

### VACE ITALIAN DELICATESSEN [ITALIAN, PIZZA, DELI]

- Distance From Hotel: 9-minute walk
- Hours: 9 am – 9 pm Monday to Friday, 9 am – 8 pm Saturday, 10 am – 5 pm Sunday.
- Outdoor Seating: No
- Typical Entrée Price: \$9
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in, online order available
- Payment: Credit Cards

## FAST CASUAL

### Fish Taco - Mexican, Fastfood

7251 Woodmont Ave  
0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda

### Subway

7201 Wisconsin Ave  
**0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency**

### Bethesda

Chipotle Mexican Grill - Mexican  
7600 Old Georgetown Rd  
**0.1miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

### Panera Bread

7201 Wisconsin Avenue  
**0.3miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

### &pizza - Bethesda - Pizza, Fast Food

7614 Old Georgetown Rd  
0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda

### Five Guys - Fastfood, American

4829 Bethesda Ave  
**0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

### Starbucks

7140 Wisconsin Ave  
**0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency**

### Bethesda

Panda Express - chinese, fast food  
**7345 Wisconsin Ave**

**.1 miles from hotel**

### Sweetgreen

4831 Bethesda Ave  
**0.2miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

### The Halal Guys - Middle Eastern

4917 Elm St  
**0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency**

### Bethesda

Cava Mezze Grill - Mediterranean, Fast Food  
**4832 Bethesda Ave**

**0.4miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

### Potbelly Sandwich Shop - Italian, Deli

4731 Elm St  
**.1 miles from hotel**



# FOOD AROUND HYATT REGENCY BETHESDA

## BAR/ PUB

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The Barking Dog - American, Bar, Pub

4723 Elm St

**0.1 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

Bethesda Blues & Jazz Supper Club

7719 Wisconsin Ave

**0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

World of Beer - Pub, Gastropub, Bar

7200 Wisconsin Ave

**0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

## DESSERT

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Yogiberry Bethesda - Dessert

4924 Elm St

**0.5 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

Georgetown Cupcake - Dessert

4834 Bethesda Ave

**0.6 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams - Dessert

4918 Elm St

**0.2 miles from Hyatt Regency Bethesda**

## GROCERY STORES & PHARMACIES

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CVS

**7235 Wisconsin Ave Ste 100, Bethesda, MD 20814**

Trader Joe's

**7900 Wisconsin Ave, Bethesda, MD 20814**

Giant Food

7142 Arlington Rd, Bethesda, MD 20814

Foxtrot

**7262 Woodmont Ave, Bethesda, MD 20814**

7-eleven

7820 Wisconsin Ave, Bethesda, MD 20814



# SIGHTSEEING NEAR BETHESDA

## GLENSTONE MUSEUM - UNIQUE AND EXCELLENT MODERN ART MUSEUM

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- Distance From Hotel: 22-minute drive
- Hours: Thursday to Sunday 10 am – 5pm, closed Monday to Wednesday.
- Admission: Free
- Reservation: There are two ongoing programs for guaranteed walk-in entry, but the rest of the programs needs visitors to schedule a visit in advance on the museum website: <https://www.glenstone.org/>
- Note: Due to the fragile nature of the works on view, all visitors must be 12 or older and all minors (ages 12–17) must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

## GREAT FALL NATIONAL PARK - BEAUTIFUL WATERFALLS, GOOD WALKS

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- Distance From Hotel: 23-minute drive
- oHours: 6 am until dark (everyday)
- oAdmission: \$20 per private vehicle, \$15 per motorcycle, \$10 per person (walk-in)
- oReservation: Not available
- oNote: Expect high crowds and delays on weekends and holidays, come as early as possible. Also, look out for fee-free days on the website:  
<https://www.nps.gov/grfa/planyourvisit/fees.htm>

# FOOD IN WASHINGTON DC

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### RAPPAHANNOCK OYSTER BAR

- Distance From Hotel: 24-minute drive
- Address: 1150 Maine Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20024
- Hours: 11:30 am – 9 pm Monday to Thursday & Sunday, 11:30 am – 10 pm Friday & Saturday.
- Outdoor Seating: Yes
- Typical Entrée Price: Oysters \$2.5 ea
- Walk-in/ Reservation Needed: Walk-in
- Payment: Credit Cards



# FOOD IN WASHINGTON DC

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## JALEO

- Distance From Hotel: 26-minute drive
  - Address: 480 7th St NW, Washington, DC 20004
  - Hours: 11 am – 10 pm Monday, 11 am – 11 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 11 am to midnight Friday, 10 am to midnight Saturday, 10 am to 10 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$15-\$30
- 

## OYAMEL

- Distance From Hotel: 27-minute drive
  - Address: 481 7th St NW, Washington, DC 20004
  - Hours: 11:30 am – 10 pm Sunday & Monday, 11:30 am – 11 pm Tuesday to Thursday, 11:30 am to midnight Friday & Saturday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$13-\$20
- 

## RUMI'S KITCHEN

- Distance From Hotel: 24-minute drive
  - Address: 640 L St NW, Washington, DC 20001
  - Hours: 11:30 am – 10 pm Monday to Friday, 12 pm – 11 pm Saturday, 12 pm - 10 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$20-\$40
- 

## RASIKA

- Distance From Hotel: 27-minute drive
  - Address: 633 D St NW, Washington, DC 20004
  - Hours: 11:30 am – 2:30 pm / 5 pm – 10pm Monday to Thursday, 11:30 pm – 2:30 / 5 pm – 10:30 pm Friday, 5 pm – 10:30 pm Saturday, 11:30 am – 2:30 pm / 5 pm – 9 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$20
- 

## LE DIPLOMATE

- Distance From Hotel: 22-minute drive
  - Address: 1601 14th St NW, Washington, DC 20009
  - Hours: 12 pm – 11 pm Monday to Thursday, 12 pm – midnight Friday, 9:30 am – midnight Saturday, 9:30 am – 11 pm Sunday.
  - Outdoor Seating: Yes
  - Typical Entrée Price: \$25-35
- 



# SIGHTSEEING IN WASHINGTON DC

## POLITICAL

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- Monuments on Washington Mall (which is a large grassy area not a shopping mall!) (also great to see them at night!) <https://nationalmall.org/explore>
- **White House tour:**  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/visit/> need tickets
- **U.S. Congress tour:**  
<https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/visit/book-a-tour>  
need tickets

## ART MUSEUMS

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- National Gallery of Art (one of the many Smithsonian museums) <https://www.nga.gov/>
- **National Gallery sculpture garden:**  
<https://www.nga.gov/visit/tours-and-guides/national-gallery-sculpture-garden.html>
- **Portrait gallery to see Obama portraits**  
<https://npg.si.edu/home/national-portrait-gallery>
- **Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden**  
(modern art museum): <https://hirshhorn.si.edu>

## HISTORY AND CULTURE MUSEUMS

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- National Museum of African American History & Culture (tickets are free but book now!):  
<https://nmaahc.si.edu/>
- **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum**  
(tickets are free but book now!):  
<https://www.ushmm.org/>
- **National Museum of the American Indian:**  
<https://americanindian.si.edu/>



# SIGHTSEEING IN WASHINGTON DC

## NEIGHBORHOODS TO WALK AROUND

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- Georgetown & Dumbarton Oaks (unique & charming neighborhood):  
<https://washington.org/visit-dc/things-see-do-georgetown-washington-dc> &  
<https://www.doaks.org/>
- **Dupont Circle to 14th & P**  
<https://washington.org/visit-dc/things-see-and-do-dupont-circle> & <https://washington.org/visit-dc/never-ending-excitement-14th-street>
- **Capitol Hill:** <https://washington.org/dc-neighborhoods/capitol-hill>

## ACTIVITIES

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- Blues Alley Jazz Club (sadly nothing playing the Wednesday before the conference; but shows that
- weekend): [www.bluesalley.com](http://www.bluesalley.com) &  
<https://www.facebook.com/bluesalley/>