

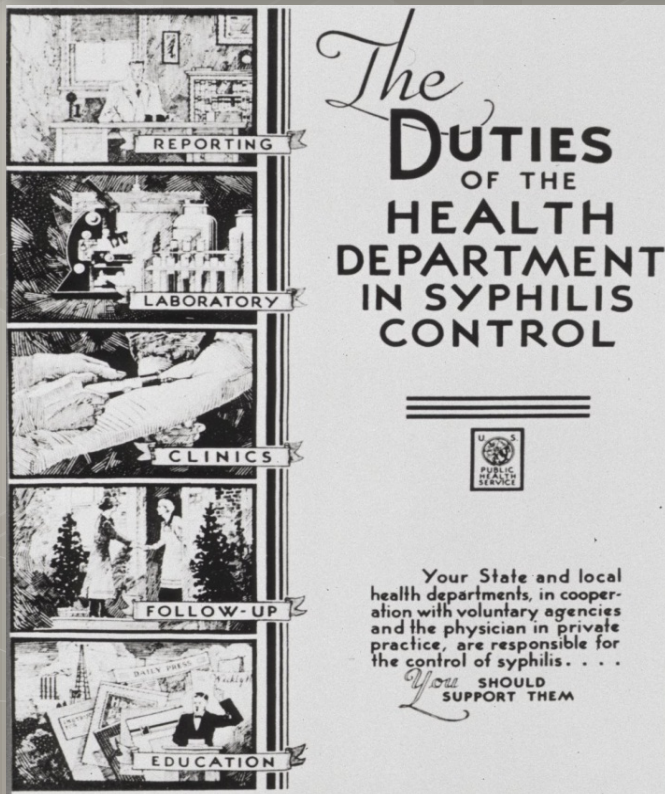


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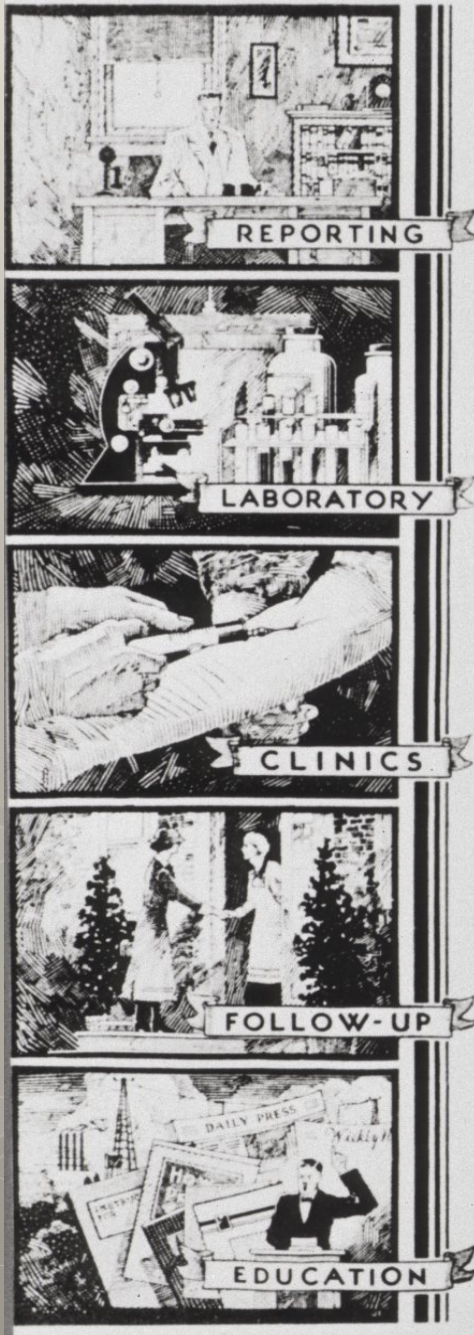
The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment

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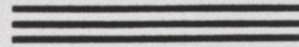
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The DUTIES OF THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT IN SYPHILIS CONTROL



Your State and local health departments, in cooperation with voluntary agencies and the physician in private practice, are responsible for the control of syphilis. . . .

You SHOULD SUPPORT THEM

U.S. Public Health Service begins study on effects of syphilis

- In 1932, the Public Health Service, working with the Tuskegee Institute, began a study of the effects of syphilis on the human body.

U.S. Public Health Service begins study on effects of syphilis

- The 1932 study was called the "Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male."
- The study initially involved 600 black male volunteers – 399 with syphilis, 201 who did not have the disease.
- Government officials recruited African American participants in the study by offering “free medical care” to them. They were also given free meals and burial insurance.
- The men recruited were mostly poor sharecropper's from Macon County, Alabama. (Macon County had a particularly high rate of syphilis cases.) These men had difficult lives, hoeing small plots of land, living in wooden shacks, and picking cotton in the season. There was little wealth in Macon County and a very small chance of seeing a doctor, even though syphilis was more rampant there than anywhere else in the South.
- The men enrolled in the study were never told they had syphilis. Instead, researchers kept this information from them and told the patients that they were being treated for "bad blood," a local term used to describe several ailments, including syphilis, anemia, and fatigue.



U.S. Public Health Service begins study on effects of syphilis

- In truth, the 399 syphilitic patients did not receive what they signed up for. They were never given the proper treatment needed to cure their syphilis, since the government wanted to study untreated syphilis. The doctors were also interested in whether the disease affected whites and blacks differently.
- Each time they visited the doctors, the men thought their condition was being treated and cured. Instead however, the “medicine” provided to them was fake and contained no medicinal properties. The doctors and nurses were not there to cure, but to observe the progress of untreated syphilis.
- Although originally projected to last 6 months, the study actually went on for 40 years, the entire time the participants assuming they were being treated. Instead, the government was purposely letting their disease progress for the study.

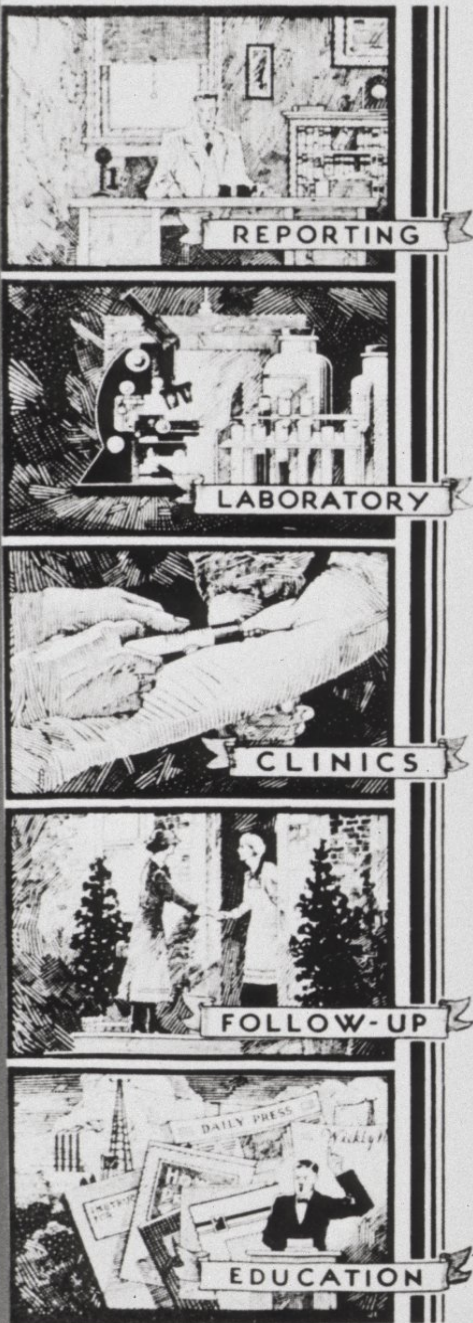


U.S. Public Health Service begins study on effects of syphilis

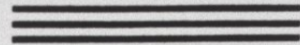
- Patients who are untreated sometimes develop no symptoms, and sometimes spontaneously recover; but they can also suffer greatly. Rashes, skin growths, liver deformity, heart damage, paralysis, insanity, and death are all possible outcomes of the untreated disease.
- Penicillin came into use in 1947, which could cure syphilis. Had penicillin been administered to the syphilitic men in the study, many would have lead longer and more comfortable lives. However, the government did not treat them.
- To ensure that the men would show up for a painful and potentially dangerous spinal tap, the doctors misled them with a letter full of promotional hype: “Last Chance for Special Free Treatment.”
- The fact that autopsies would eventually be required was also concealed. (It was from the autopsies that the government would get their final data.)
- The experiment continued in spite of the Henderson Act (1943), a public health law requiring testing and treatment for venereal disease, and in spite of the World Health Organization's Declaration of Helsinki (1964), which specified that “informed consent” was needed for experiments involving human beings.
- By the time the study was exposed in 1972, 28 men had died of syphilis, 100 others were dead of related complications, at least 40 wives had been infected and 19 children had contracted the disease at birth.



Syphilis rash on hand



The **DUTIES OF THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT IN SYPHILIS CONTROL**



Your State and local health departments, in cooperation with voluntary agencies and the physician in private practice, are responsible for the control of syphilis. . . .

You SHOULD SUPPORT THEM

Reconsider this poster.

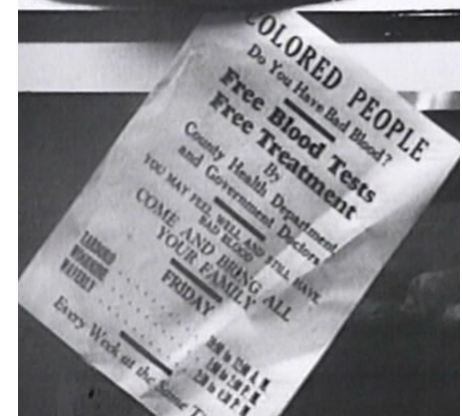
- Considering what you have now learned about Tuskegee, does your interpretation of this poster and its purpose change? Explain.
- In what ways does the message of this poster contradict the actions of the US Health Dept.?

The study becomes public

- The story finally broke in the *Washington Star* on July 25, 1972, in an article by Jean Heller of the Associated Press. Her source was Peter Buxtun, a former PHS venereal disease interviewer and one of the few whistle blowers over the years.
- When the experiment was brought to the attention of the media in 1972, news anchor Harry Reasoner described it as an experiment that “used human beings as laboratory animals in a long and inefficient study of how long it takes syphilis to kill someone.”
- Many began to compare Tuskegee to the appalling experiments performed by Nazi doctors on their Jewish victims during World War II.
- The PHS, however, remained unrepentant, claiming the men had been “volunteers” and “were always happy to see the doctors,” and an Alabama state health officer who had been involved claimed “somebody is trying to make a mountain out of a molehill.”
- Under the glare of publicity, the government ended their experiment, and for the first time provided the men with effective medical treatment for syphilis.

The end of the study

- After the Tuskegee study became public, it caused a public outcry that led the Assistant Secretary for Health and Scientific Affairs to appoint an Ad Hoc Advisory Panel to review the study.
- The panel had nine members from the fields of medicine, law, religion, labor, education, health administration, and public affairs.
- The panel found that the men had agreed freely to be examined and treated. However, there was no evidence that researchers had informed them of the study or its real purpose. In fact, the men had been misled and had not been given all the facts required to provide informed consent.
- The men were never given adequate treatment for their disease. Even when penicillin became the drug of choice for syphilis in 1947, researchers did not offer it to the subjects. The advisory panel found nothing to show that subjects were ever given the choice of quitting the study, even when this new, highly effective treatment became widely used.



The end of the study

- The advisory panel concluded that the Tuskegee Study was "ethically unjustified"--the knowledge gained was sparse when compared with the risks the study posed for its subjects.
- In October 1972, the panel advised stopping the study at once. A month later, the Assistant Secretary for Health and Scientific Affairs announced the end of the Tuskegee Study.
- In "Tuskegee's" wake, major changes in federal rules governing medical research were established, including written informed consent and the creation of institutional review boards to oversee human subject research.
- The study also created another legacy--it became the metaphor for the distrust of scientific research, the risks of government provision of medical care, and the exploitation of poor patients.



Ernest Hendon



Reparations

- In the summer of 1973, a class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of the study participants and their families. Fred Gray, a lawyer who had previously defended Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, was the lead attorney. In 1974, a \$10 million out-of-court settlement was reached. (This resulted in only around \$37,000 for survivors.)
- As part of the settlement, the U.S. government promised to give lifetime medical benefits and burial services to all living participants. The Tuskegee Health Benefit Program (THBP) was established to provide these services.
- In 1975, wives, widows and offspring were added to the program.
- In 1995, the program was expanded to include health as well as medical benefits.
- It wasn't until May, 1997 that the US government acknowledged its wrong doing during the experiments when President Bill Clinton issued a formal apology.
- The last study participant died in January 2004. The last widow receiving benefits died in January 2009. As of 2009, there were 15 offspring receiving medical and health benefits.



Sources

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- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-reverby/a-new-lesson-from-the-old_b_378649.html
- <http://ihm.nlm.nih.gov/luna/servlet/detail/NLMNLM~1~1~101447551~209482:The-duties-of-the-health-department>