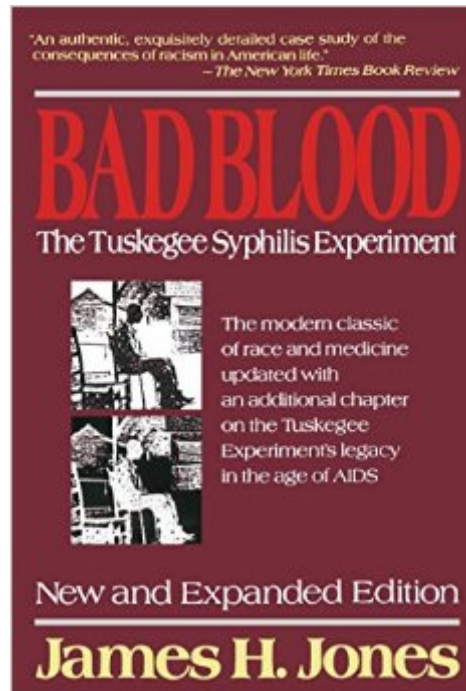


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Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, New And Expanded Edition



Synopsis

From 1932 to 1972, the United States Public Health Service conducted a non-therapeutic experiment involving over 400 black male sharecroppers infected with syphilis. The Tuskegee Study had nothing to do with treatment. Its purpose was to trace the spontaneous evolution of the disease in order to learn how syphilis affected black subjects. From 1932 to 1972, the United States Public Health Service conducted a non-therapeutic experiment involving over 400 black male sharecroppers infected with syphilis. The Tuskegee Study had nothing to do with treatment. Its purpose was to trace the spontaneous evolution of the disease in order to learn how syphilis affected black subjects. The men were not told they had syphilis; they were not warned about what the disease might do to them; and, with the exception of a smattering of medication during the first few months, they were not given health care. Instead of the powerful drugs they required, they were given aspirin for their aches and pains. Health officials systematically deceived the men into believing they were patients in a government study of "bad blood", a catch-all phrase black sharecroppers used to describe a host of illnesses. At the end of this 40 year deathwatch, more than 100 men had died from syphilis or related complications. "Bad Blood" provides compelling answers to the question of how such a tragedy could have been allowed to occur. Tracing the evolution of medical ethics and the nature of decision making in bureaucracies, Jones attempted to show that the Tuskegee Study was not, in fact, an aberration, but a logical outgrowth of race relations and medical practice in the United States. Now, in this revised edition of "Bad Blood", Jones traces the tragic consequences of the Tuskegee Study over the last decade. A new introduction explains why the Tuskegee Study has become a symbol of black oppression and a metaphor for medical neglect, inspiring a prize-winning play, a Nova special, and a motion picture. A new concluding chapter shows how the black community's wide-spread anger and distrust caused by the Tuskegee Study has hampered efforts by health officials to combat AIDS in the black community. "Bad Blood" was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and was one of the "N.Y. Times" 12 best books of the year.

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Customer Reviews

"Bad Blood" is a carefully researched and excellently written account of one of the most horrendous and despicable acts perpetrated by the United States Government, the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. In 1932, four hundred illiterate and semi-literate black sharecroppers in Alabama who were diagnosed with syphilis were selected for an experiment sponsored by the U.S. Health Service, whose purport was to demonstrate that the course of untreated syphilis runs differently in blacks as opposed to whites. It was "race medicine" of the worst kind and, as a newspaper editorial stated when the experiment finally came to light 40 years later, it was ethically on a par with the medical experiments in the Nazi death camps. The men selected for the study were for the most part uneducated (only one man had reached the eighth grade and none had gone to high school), they were never explained the purpose of the study, and they were given no medicine to help their advancing symptoms. Even after penicillin was found in the 1940s to halt or significantly reduce the symptoms of the disease, it was withheld from the patients, who were left to suffer horrible deaths from advanced syphilis one by one. In 1972 the experiment was finally brought into the open by a young law student who passed the information to the Associated Press, and when the story broke on Page One of newspapers across the country, it caused a national firestorm. Journalists, public officials, and ordinary citizens were outraged by the news accounts. Incredibly, when the doctors involved in the experiment were asked for an accountability, their response was a collective shrug and a "so what?"

One of the least known facts of U.S. history is the government sponsored syphilis experiment conducted upon 399 African-American men from 1932 to 1972. Over the course of these five decades, the U.S. Public Health Service exploited African-American sharecroppers in its effort to determine if the long-term affects of syphilis were different for black people than it was for white people. During the trials, the doctors who conducted the experimentations intentionally denied these

men treatment; never informed them of syphilis' destructiveness to their health; and ignored the fact that these men were infecting their respective wives and sexual partners with the disease. As the experiments continued, doctors calculatedly deceived the subjects, informing them that they were suffering from what was categorized as: "bad blood". As the disease ravaged the minds and bodies of these unsuspecting men, no effort was made by the physicians of the Public Health Service to either inform them regarding the disease or provide them with treatment in an effort to curtail its devastating effects. Jones presents a detailed, non-sensationalized writing that delves into the ignorance, racism and outright inhumanity that was entrenched throughout the United States; the medical arena; and society in general prior to and during these horrific experiments. He provides a plethora of documentation to substantiate the bigotry and callousness of the medical field during the era, and acknowledges the data provided by individuals who participated in the experiments or who conveyed valuable information.

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