Embodied
Consciousness,
Informed
Choices:
Critical Perspectives
On the
Menstrual Cycle

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

Thank you to the following organizations for supporting this conference:

Chatham University
UPMC – Magee Women’s Hospital of UPMC
Conference Schedule

**Thursday June 2, 2011**

9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Board of Directors Meeting  
*PCW Room in Anderson Cafeteria*

Noon – 5:00 pm
Registration available  
*Eddy Theater Lobby*

5:00 – 7:00 pm
Poster Session and Reception  
*James Laughlin Music Center, Welker*

Posters and Exhibits:

**Perceptions and Misperceptions of Women’s and Men’s Attitudes about Sexual Activity During Menstruation** (Poster)  
Mindy J. Erchull, Lauren P. Hartwell, Stephanie Lichiello, and Alexandra Zelin, University of Mary Washington

Many taboos surrounding sex during menstruation exist, and many people choose to abstain during menses. We investigated predictors of attitudes towards sex during menstruation among women and men. Perceptions and misperceptions of normative beliefs about menstrual sex were also studied. How misperceptions may influence attitudes and behaviors is discussed.

**Effectiveness of a Self Instructional Module on Management of Dysmenorrhea among Adolescent Girls in a Rural High School in Bangalore, India** (Poster)  
Julia George, Kannur Medical College, Anjarakandy, India

This study assessed the knowledge on management of dysmenorrhea among adolescent girls in a rural high school. A self-instructional module on the management of dysmenorrhea helped promote awareness among adolescent girls and also assisted with health promotion within this rural area.

**PMS Experiences of Women in Couple Relationships: Implications of Awareness Through Daily Self-Monitoring of Symptoms** (Poster)  
Yasmin Jade Hawkins, Michelle Rhyder, Jane Ussher, and Janette Perz, University of Western Sydney, Australia

Interviews with women in couple relationships before and after self-monitoring of daily PMS symptoms reveal sub-categories of a prominent theme of ‘awareness’. Their accounts suggest that not only can premenstrual coping be improved, but that relationship dynamics can also be enhanced through awareness of menstrual cycle mood and behaviour patterns.
Vagina vérité® - An Unabashed Exploration of the Plain, Ordinary, Mysterious Matter of Vaginas (Exhibit and Presentation, 6:30 PM)
Alexandra Jacoby, leave the castle, LLC

A 10-year conversation began when a friend asked photographer Alexandra Jacoby whether she liked the way her vagina looked. Via documentary-style vulva images, voice and reflection, Jacoby presents an unabashed exploration of the plain, ordinary, mysterious matter of vaginas… “so we can see ourselves for ourselves.”

Relationship between Menstrual Cycle-Related Symptoms, Attitudes toward Menstruation and Ambivalent Sexism (Poster)
Maria Luisa Marvan, Institute of Psychological Research, Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico, and Rocío Vázquez-Toboada, Department of Psychology, Universidad de las Américas-Puebla, Mexico

Adult women completed three questionnaires. Attitudes toward menstruation were influenced by benevolent sexism. In turn, perimenstrual symptoms were predicted by high scores on the “Proscriptions and prescriptions” subscale of the BATM, which includes activities that women should do while menstruating, as well as the belief that menstruation disables women.

Women’s Attitudes Toward Menopause and Toward Hysterectomy After a Hysterectomy (Poster)
Maria Luisa Marvan, Rosa Lilia Castillo, and Yamilet Ehrenzweig, Institute of Psychological Research, Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico

Middle-aged women were surveyed. Women who had a natural menopause showed more positive attitudes toward menopause than women who had undergone hysterectomy. The most negative attitudes were showed by those women who were premenopausal prior to hysterectomy and who had salpingo-oophorectomy.

This Ain't Your Mama's Maxi-Pad (Poster)
Chella Quint, Adventures in Menstruating, and Elizabeth Kissling, Eastern Washington University

Within a stylized retro motif, "This Ain't Your Mama's Maxi-Pad" deconstructs vintage femcare ads with wit, irony and brute force. The same messages, though dressed differently, are still in use today.
Friday June 3, 2011

7:00 – 8:15 am

Breakfast Meeting: SMCR Blog

Laughlin Music Center - Welker

Plenary Panel: Menstruation and Stigma (8:30-10:15 am) Eddy Theater

Chair: Ingrid Johnston-Robledo, State University of New York at Fredonia
Discussant: Paula Derry, Paula Derry Enterprises in Health Psychology

Stigma and Emotional Health
Lawrence M. Nelson, MD, Head, Integrative Reproductive Medicine Group
Intramural Research Program on Reproductive and Adult Endocrinology
Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
National Institutes of Health

In order to feel stigmatized one must accept the proposition that shame or discredit is validly associated with the factor at issue. Education is the path away from this. This is important because evidence to be presented shows that stigma has adverse effects on emotional health.

Significance of Menstruation in Native American Cultures: The Apache Sunrise Dance
Carol Markstrom, College of Human Resources and Education, West Virginia University

Native American cultures have long-standing beliefs and traditions concerning the significance of menstruation. Menarche, in particular, is regarded as a particularly potent and pivotal event in the life span warranting special ceremonial recognition. This presentation will focus on cultural beliefs about menstruation according to its broad-based, vital life-giving properties.

Public Health Education about the Menstrual Cycle
Evelina W. Sterling, President, Rachel’s Well

Evidence has shown that women with disorders of the menstrual cycle frequently experience a delay in diagnosis. Frequently this vital sign is ignored in women's health education initiatives, possibly related to the associated stigma. It is time for a new path forward.
**Stigma by Association? The Career Progression of Menstrual Cycle Researchers**

Joan C. Chrisler, Connecticut College; Ingrid Johnston-Robledo, State University of New York at Fredonia; Jennifer Gorman, Connecticut College; and Amy Fisk, State University of New York at Fredonia

Results of a survey of menstrual cycle researchers will be presented and discussed. Participants responded to questions about whether they believe the topics they study have affected their career progress, how others’ react to their work, how they manage negative reactions, and whether they believe they have experienced stigma by association with stigmatized topics.

**10:15-10:30 am Morning Break**

**Eddy Theater Lobby**

**Panel Session 1A: Menopause/Biology (10:30 am-Noon)**

**A Critical Review of the Putative Effects of Menstrual Cycle-related Hormones on Brain Activity in the Neuroscience Literature**

Jean Lamont, The Pennsylvania State University

Methodology implicating hormonal causality for differential neural activity across the menstrual cycle is examined. We suggest that consideration of 3rd variables (social factors) is insufficient to conclude such hormonal responsibility. Literature regarding menstrual cycle effects on cognitive ability, sexual behavior preferences, and emotion regulation is reviewed, supporting this notion.

**Quality of Life in Women Taking Progesterone for Vasomotor Symptoms: A 12-Week Randomized, Masked Placebo-Controlled Trial in Healthy, Normal-Weight Women 1-10 Years since Final Menstrual Flow**

Christine Hitchcock and Jerilynn Prior, Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research (CeMCOR), University of British Columbia

Health-related quality of life outcomes in a randomized, placebo-controlled progesterone trial showed that menopause-specific quality of life Vasomotor and Physical subscales improved more on progesterone than placebo. Psychosocial and Sexual, as well as all SF-36 subscales, did not differ by therapy, although the Sexual subscale improved in both arms.
Progesterone for Menopausal Hot Flushes/Flashes and Night Sweats: A 12-Week Randomized, Masked Placebo-Controlled Trial in Healthy, Normal-Weight Women 1-10 Years since Final Menstrual Flow
Jerilynn Prior and Christine Hitchcock, Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research (CeMCOR), University of British Columbia

In a randomized, masked, one-month baseline, three-month therapy trial we compared the effectiveness of placebo versus daily oral micronized progesterone for hot flushes and night sweats in healthy menopausal women. Progesterone was much more effective than placebo. These results should help to change the paradigm of menopause meaning estrogen deficiency.

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction for Hot Flash Management
Susan Cohen, University of Pittsburgh; Margaret (Peggy) Stubbs, Chatham University; Kathleen Spadero, Chatham University; and Susan Sereika, University of Pittsburgh

This randomized pilot study examined meditation for symptom management. Participants (46) attended 8 meditation or 8 control sessions. Variables were Hot Flashes, and Sleep Disruption. There was a time effect for sleep disruptions yet no group by time effect to differentiate the groups and a nonstatistically significant hot flash decrease.

A Two-factor Model of Women's Concerns about the Impact of Menopause on Fertility and Physical Health
Judy Strauss, Yeshiva University

Social factors that affect women’s attitudes toward menopause were examined in a sample of 1,037 baby-boomer women. Analyses supported a two-factor model of women’s adaptation to menopause: attitudes concerning the effects of menopause on fertility and the cessation of menstruation had different antecedents than attitudes concerning health and attractiveness.

Panel Session 1B: Reconsidering Menstruation: Young Women’s Embodied Reflections and An Initiative for Change (10:30 am-Noon) Woodland 103
Chair: Stephanie Dalness, Chatham University
Discussants: Kate Fishman, Chatham University; Yara Doleh, University of Toronto
Coming Out of the Menstrual Closet: Better Late than Never
April Condemi, Katherine Fishman, Laura Douglas, Britny Nemeth, Margaret O’Malia, and Jessica Pais, Chatham University

Young women reflect on their attitude shifts towards menarche, lesbian experience and exclusion, and the cultural significance of learning anatomy and biology in college. Panelists comment on how these experiences are conflated with social stigmas of shame, concealment, and a resounding lack of discourse combating negative feelings towards menstruation.

Conceptualizing Cycles, Normalizing Change
Stephanie Dalness, Chatham University

A research-based intervention provides girls with an opportunity to normalize menstruation. The importance of exploring individual menstrual attitudes and experiences in counseling young girls is endorsed as an essential step in enhancing female embodiment, reducing bodily shame, and reworking dominant views of cyclicity as pathological.

12:00 – 1:15 pm Lunch __________ ____________ Laughlin Music Center - Welker

Panel Session 2A: Activism (1:15-2:15 pm)
Sanger

Redefining the "Bleeding Wound"
Jessica Cortese, Middlesex County College

The perceived yearning to heal the “bleeding wound” has constructed the menstruating body into a symbol of neuroses and inadequacies. Consequently, a new discourse that seeks to challenge the patriarchal unconscious and present an alternative to menstrual oppression, is countering western phallocentric theory, patriarchal rhetoric, and providing a space for menstruating bodies to organize and defy masculine culture.

“When I Learn to Love My Blood the Revolution’s Begun”: Embodied Resistance and Visceral Display
Harriet Moon Smith, Towson University

Menstrual activists must plunge into our relationships with our bodies—our blood, smells, and tastes. I will explore the assertion of visceral realities within the larger context of menstrual activism, showing how personal and public visceral display constitutes a resistance to the dominant menstrual discourse by calling upon embodied resistance.
Selling My Soul to Start the Conversation
Tomi-Ann Roberts, Colorado College

I share my experience as a “UbyKotex Advocate,” helping launch a new product line and educational website to challenge cultural taboos around periods and vaginal care for young women. Did I sell my soul to a corporation whose primary goal is to sell disposable menstrual products? Or start a productive, feminist conversation?

Panel Session 2B: Menarche (1:15-2:15 pm) Woodland 103

“Tell Me About Your First Period” A Mixed-Methods Study of Women's Menarche Experiences
Virginia Mackintosh, Ashlie Dofflemyer, Rachel Jobe, Sarah Kelley, Caitlin Messinger, and Gwen Paulson, University of Mary Washington

This study sought knowledge about young women’s experiences with menarche and their mothers’ responses to it. Through qualitative narratives and quantitative questions, participants described menarche and rated the quality of their relationship with their mother. Their mothers completed a similar survey of their experiences around their daughter’s menarche.

Blood is Thicker Than Water: Menarche as a Trigger for Memories Mother-Daughter Dyads across Cultures
Sheryl Mendlinger, Julie Cwikel, Patricia Ann Farrell, and Rachel Gershaw, Institute on Urban Health Research, Northeastern University

This paper presents a theoretical analysis of in-depth interviews with mother-daughter dyads and examines the type of memories women relate when talking about body changes at puberty and the onset of menstruation. Memories were related to their mothers, grandmothers or peers; sanitary measures; cultural or religious connotations; and forbidden things.

Advertising Menstruation to Tween Girls
Victoria Velding, Wayne State University

In this presentation, I report on a content analysis of advertisements in one “tween” magazine. Results indicated that ads negatively depict menstruation and imply that girls do not have control of their menstrual cycles, and, more generally, do not have control of their bodies.
Keynote Speaker:

Organisms & Objects:  The Technological Health Crisis of Toxic Shock Syndrome & Rely Tampons
Sharra Vostral, Gender & Women's Studies and History, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

How did tampons become associated with Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)? This talk examines factors leading to the identification of TSS and the role played by Rely tampons. The concept biologically incompatible technology will be used to explain the complicated relationship of constituent bacteria, women’s menstrual cycles, and a reactive technology.

(2:30-3:30 pm)

3:30-3:45 Afternoon Snack  ____________________              _Sanger Lobby

Panel Session 3A: Big Ideas (3:45-5:00pm)

Concepts of Embodiment and the Reproductive System
Paula Derry, Paula Derry Enterprises in Health Psychology

Facts about the menstrual cycle are given meaning via underlying assumptions about the nature of embodiment and the role of hormones in embodiment. We present an overview of assumptions, including varying concepts of what a hormone is, relevance of hormones to defining life stage, and what body image is.

Lunar Law
Shari Motro, University of Richmond

This presentation interprets the widespread use of hormonal contraception as a symptom of a legal framework that pathologizes and marginalizes menstruation and pregnancy.

The Rhetoric of Amenorrhea: Degendering the DSM V Criteria for Anorexia Nervosa
Dafna Rehavia-Hanauer, University of Derby, UK

This paper critically analyses from a feminist perspective the ways in which the concepts of gender and amenorrhea are used in current revisions of the definition of the eating disorder anorexia nervosa in the DSM V. The direction is to redefine the phenomenon of self starvation as a genderless disorder.
Space and Time in the Menstrual Cycle
Emily Morris Graves, Louisiana State University

I use a Bakhtinian framework to analyze women’s accounts of their menstrual experience, as well as media artifacts, to argue that experiences across the menstrual cycle are informed by fixed temporal and spatial qualities.

Coaches’ Perceptions of a Menstruating Athlete
Meghan McLain, Joan C. Chrisler, and Jennifer Gorman, Connecticut College

We evaluated male and female coaches’ perceptions of a female athlete who asks to sit out a practice due to either menstrual cramps or stomach pains. Gender differences in coaches’ evaluations of the target athlete’s traits and characteristics will be discussed, as will differences on a measure of Beliefs about and Attitudes toward Menstruation (BATM).

Objectification Theory and Women’s Experiences of Physical Menstrual Symptoms
Elizabeth Isaac Feinberg, New School for Social Research

Prior research finds that women reporting higher levels of self-objectification maintain more negative attitudes and emotions towards their own menstruation (Roberts, 2004). This study finds that self-objectification is also associated with more physical menstrual symptoms, and that relationships between self-objectification and symptoms were mediated by negative menstrual attitudes and emotions.

Normal and Natural, or Burdensome and Terrible? Women with Spinal Cord Injuries Discuss Ambivalence about Menstruation
Heather Dillaway, Cathy Lysack, and Katherine Cross, Wayne State University

Using data from 20 in-depth interviews with women with spinal cord injuries (SCI) in 2007-2008, we examine how women with SCI think about and experience amenorrhea and menstruation post-injury, so that we can begin to compare the attitudes of women with SCI to the attitudes of women who are able-bodied.

5:15 – 6:15 pm  SMCR Business Meeting  Sanger
6:30 – 8:30 pm  Friday Night Banquet  AFC Patio, weather permitting OR James Laughlin Music Center, Welker
8:30 pm – 10:00 pm  Entertainment  Chapel
Breakfast Meeting: The future of SMCR

Plenary Panel: Re: Cycling and Sustainability (8:30 am-10:15 am)  Eddy Theater

Chair and Discussant: Dr. David Hassenzahl, Dean, School of Sustainability and the Environment, Chatham University

No Sharks in the Woods: Menstruation Myths and Camping
Nancy Gift, Chatham University

Discussions of camping often devolve into discussions about a lack of bathrooms on the trail. Among bathroom bodily functions, menstruation is conspicuously absent from discussion. I will compare menstrual products in the context of multi-day use while camping. More environmentally friendly menstrual products facilitate women’s access to the environment.

Perceptions, Attitudes and Acceptability of Menstrual Cups as a Method for Managing Menstruation: Experiences of School Girls and Women in Nairobi, Kenya
Rhoune Ochako, Teresa Saliku, Jean-Christophe Fotso and Salome Wawire, African Population & Health Research Center (APHRC), Kenya

Despite the onset of menstruation being an important landmark in the transition to adulthood, it can present serious problems and concerns among adolescent girls and women who cannot afford sanitary towels for menstrual management. We explore perceptions, attitudes and acceptability of menstrual cups as a method of managing menstrual flow.

Cycles of life: Protecting the Planet and Alleviating Poverty through Sustainable Menstruation Management?
Megan White Mukuria, Founder and CEO, ZanaAfrica

Globally, menstruation keeps girls out of school, repeating cycles of poverty. How do we “sustainably” address this? Drawing on a decade of work with girls in Kenya, Megan shares a promising solution to realize a vision of all girls managing their menstruation with dignity while protecting the planet.
**Cloth Pads: A Responsible, Sustainable, Natural Choice Whose Time Has Come....Around Again?**
Mary Beth Karchella-MacCumbee, and Lihn Luu, Chatham University

Belonging to "the cloth community" and trying, as much as possible, to live a paperless life, I will describe how I have become involved in making and distributing cloth menstrual pads. In addition, I’ll comment on what some of my clients think about using cloth pads for menstrual management.

**Curing the Curse in Africa: Menstrual Disability and the Corporate Cure**
David Linton, Marymount Manhattan College

This presentation examines the ways that corporate marketing strategies in African countries use suggestions of social and physical disability in order accomplish three objectives: 1) create positive images of the company through corporate philanthropy; 2) create brand consciousness in new African markets; 3) increase sales to both American and African consumers.

### Panel Session 4A: International Issues and Contexts (10:30am-Noon) Sanger

**Young Women’s Attitudes toward Menstruation, Religious Affiliation, Intensity of Religious Practice, Adherence to Religious Beliefs about Menstruation and Acculturation**
Margaret (Peggy) Stubbs, Joe Wister, Christina Michelmore, Haya Abdel-Latif, Vanessa Thompson, Sagcan, Seyhan, Chatham University

The menstrual attitudes of Muslim and non-Muslim undergraduates attending an all-women’s college were examined, considering religious affiliation, intensity of religious practice, adherence to religious beliefs about menstruation and acculturation. Results inform our understanding of young women’s current menstrual attitudes, particularly those of Muslim students attending an all-women’s college.

**Construction of Menstruation in Indian Television Commercials**
Arpan Yagnik, School of Media & Communications, Bowling Green State University

The study explores the dominant presence of latent themes that portray menstruation negatively in female hygiene products television commercials. Four major themes emerged from the thematic analysis of 50 Indian TV commercials. This study aspires to encourage the use of positive themes of menstruation to promote the female hygiene products.
Problematizations of Adverse Effects of Hormonal Contraceptives in Uganda
Marianne Tellier, Reproductive Health Consultant, United Republic of Tanzania; and Maria Hyttel, Department for Public Health, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

This qualitative study explores how different actors in Uganda problematize adverse effects of hormonal contraceptives such as menstrual irregularities, and the implications for how adverse effects are addressed. The findings indicate mismatches between user and provider/policy perspectives, especially regarding the importance and impact of menstrual irregularities on couples’ sexual health.

Mood and the Menstrual Cycle: A Literature Review
Sarah E Romans, University of Otago Wellington, New Zealand; Rose F Clarkson, University of Toronto; Gillian Einstein, University of Toronto; and Donna E Stewart, University of Toronto

This paper presents the results of a systematic literature review of studies on mood and menstrual cycle phase, with prospective daily data collection. A perimenstrual not a premenstrual pattern of mood change emerged. Their methodological strengths and weaknesses are analyzed and recommendations for good future research made.

Attachment Style, Self-silencing and Premenstrual Distress: The Intersubjective Experience of PMS
Janette Perz and Jane Ussher, University of Western Sydney, Australia

The association between attachment style, self silencing and relationship context was examined in women presenting with PMS. Insecure attachment style was associated with self-silencing, premenstrual distress, partner distancing and support, relationships tension, and coping. This supports the view that PMS is an intersubjective experience, negotiated in the context of relationships.

PMS as a Process of Negotiation: Women’s Coping Strategies for Premenstrual Change and Distress
Jane Ussher and Janette Perz, University of Western Sydney, Australia

Interviews with 58 women identified coping strategies that reduce distress associated with premenstrual change, including awareness, giving permission, avoidance, minimising responsibility, tolerating PMS, self-care, medical support and intersubjective negotiation. This suggests that premenstrual change is an ongoing process of negotiation, in which women are agentic subjects, not passive ‘PMS sufferers’.
Men's Accounts of Their Partner's PMS: A Thematic Analysis of Forum Posts from PMSBuddy.com
Marlee King, University of Western Sydney, Australia

A thematic analysis was conducted on men’s online forum posts from the website, PMSBuddy.com in order to explore their accounts and constructions of their partner’s PMS. Results reinforce notions of PMS as a relational issue, with implications for couple based PMS interventions for couples seeking treatment or support for premenstrual distress.

12:00 – 2:00 pm Lunch and Conference Conclusion — Laughlin Music Center – Welker

12: 30 – 1:00 pm Lunchtime Speaker:

Reifying the Stigmatization of “Girl Parts”: Tampax’s Use of God/Devil Terms in the Zack16 Campaign
Dacia Charlesworth, Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne

This paper examines “Zack16,” which depicts the life of a 16 year old boy who awoke one day and had “girl parts.” Using Weaver’s God/Devil terms, I discovered that penis, Tampax, vaginal concealment, and indirect communication are God terms whereas vagina, menstruation, vaginal revelation, and direct communication are Devil terms. Findings indicate a need to begin analyzing stealth marketing campaigns and to be aware of menstruators’ “double bind.”

1:30 pm Awards Announcements

2:00 pm Conference Conclusion