

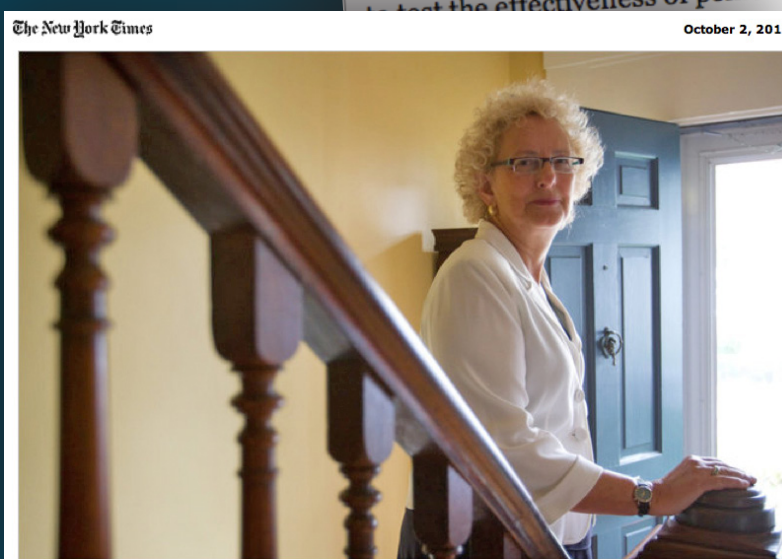
In October 2010, President Obama apologized to the Guatemalan government for U.S.-sponsored medical studies during the 1940s in which men and women were infected with syphilis. The Obama administration learned of the studies from historian Susan Reverby, who noticed the records of the vast postwar medical-infection program in a history archive. A remarkable cascade of events followed her revelation.

Beyond Apologies and Melodramas:

The U.S. Public Health Service Sexually-Transmitted Diseases Studies in Tuskegee and Guatemala

Susan Reverby

Marion Butler McLean Professor in the History of Ideas and Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, Wellesley College



Susan M. Reverby, a Wellesley College professor, at home in Cambridge, Mass. Her work uncovered the Guatemala study.

Wednesday, February 15, 2012

4:15 – 5:30 p.m.

Room 112, Squash Courts Building
41 Wyllys Avenue

CONTACT PROF. LAURA STARK: ljstark@wesleyan.edu

HOME PAGE TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS

The New York Times **Research**

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION A

Search Health 3,000+ Topics Go

Inside Health
Research Fitness & Nutrition

U.S. Apologizes for Syphilis Tests in Guatemala

By DONALD G. McNEIL Jr.
Published: October 1, 2010

From 1946 to 1948, American public health doctors deliberately infected nearly 700 Guatemalans — prison inmates, mental patients and soldiers — with [venereal diseases](#) in what was meant as an effort to test the effectiveness of penicillin.

...merican tax dollars, through the [National Institutes of Health](#), even [paid for syphilis-infected prostitutes](#) to sleep with prisoners, since Guatemalan prisons allowed such visits. When the prostitutes did not succeed in infecting the men, some prisoners had the bacteria poured onto scrapes made on their penises, faces or arms, and in some cases it was injected by spinal puncture.

...f the subjects contracted the disease, they were given [antibiotics](#).

“However, whether everyone was then cured is not clear,” said Susan M. Reverby, the professor at Wellesley College who brought the experiments to light in a [research paper](#) that prompted American health officials to investigate.

The revelations were made public on Friday, when Secretary of State [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) and Health and Human Services Secretary [Kathleen Sebelius](#) apologized to the government of [Guatemala](#) and the survivors and descendants of those infected. They called the experiments “clearly unethical.”

“Although these events occurred more than 64 years ago, we are outraged that such reprehensible research could have occurred under the guise of public health,” the secretaries said in a statement. “We deeply regret that it happened, and we apologize to the individuals who were affected by such abhorrent research practices.”

RECOMMEND
TWITTER
LINKEDIN
COMMENTS (145)
E-MAIL
PRINT
REPRINTS
SHARE

George Clooney
The Descendants
Visit the Site

on this article.
[Read All Comments \(145\) »](#)