“Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male”
A Closure Comes to the Tuskegee Study

Shamim M. Baker
Los Angeles

Otis W. Brawley, M.D.
Atlanta

Leonard S. Marks, M.D.
Los Angeles

Photographs of the staff and participants of the TSUS, reproduced by the National Archives
Tuskegee, Al c1940

Supported in part by GSK educational grant

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Why The Current Report?

- Death of last survivor in 2004
- Story untold in urology
- Under-representation of African-American men in prostate research trials

In the official U.S. governmental apology in 1997, one of the last survivors of the Tuskegee Study is featured (1.9MB)

Film courtesy of CNN
Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis (TSUS)

- **Purpose**: To define natural history of disease in African-American men
- **Location**: Macon County, Alabama
  - 36% seropositivity
- **Sponsor**: United States Public Health Service (USPHS)
- **Design**: Longitudinal observation
- **Duration**: 1932-1972
Study Organization: 1932-1933

- 4,000 African-American men screened: 399 with tertiary syphilis and 201 seronegative enrolled
- Incentives: free medical care, lunches, transportation, and burial stipends
- Time frame: Originally 6-8 months, extended to time of death
Eunice Rivers, R.N.

- Facilitate recruitment

- Liaison between doctors and community

- “Miss Rivers’ Study”

Photo courtesy US National Archive

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Study Continuation: 1941-1964

- Study continued despite …
  - U.S. entry into WWII (1941)
  - Penicillin availability (1945)
  - Nuremberg Code (1947) and Declaration of Helsinki (1964)

- Became longest observational study in medical history, 1932-1972
End of TSUS

- July 26, 1972 story in NY times
- Two main issues
  - Penicillin therapy
  - Informed consent
- Study halted in 1973

WASHINGTON, July 25—For 40 years the United States Public Health Service has conducted a study in which human beings with syphilis, who were induced to serve as guinea pigs, have gone without medical treatment for the disease and a few have died of its late effects, even though an effective therapy was eventually discovered. The study was conducted to determine from autopsies what the disease does to the human body. Officials of the health service who initiated the experiment have long since retired. Current officials, who say they have serious doubts about the morality of the study, also say that it is too late to treat the syphilis in any surviving participants.

Doctors in the service say they are now rendering whatever other medical services they can give to the survivors while the study of the disease effects continues. Dr. Merlin K. DuVal, Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare for Health and Scientific Affairs, expressed shock on learning of the study. He said that he was making an immediate investigation. The experiment, called the Tuskegee Study, began in 1932 with about 600 black men.
Outcomes of TSUS

- Over 100 participants died, including wives and children *

- 13 peer-reviewed publications were derived from study

- Eunice Rivers, R.N., first African-American to publish a paper in *Journal of American Medical Association*

- $10 million dollar settlement

* Source: La Times Obituary, 1/25/04

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Kennedy Hearings, 1973

- U.S. Subcommittee on Health

- Nurse Rivers was a prominent witness

Congressional Hearings chaired by Senator Kennedy (2.0MB)

FilmCourtesy of HBO, “Miss Evers Boys”, 1997
Legacy of TSUS

- 1974: National Research Act
- 1974-1978: Commission created under National Research Act
- 1979: Belmont Report for Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research
Official Apology
The White House, May 16, 1997

President Clinton calls onto the survivors and descendents of the
TSUS for an official governmental apology  (2.9MB)

Film courtesy of CNN

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‘Tuskegee Effect,’ 2005

- Lingering African-American distrust of medical research

- Critical under-representation of African-American men in prostate trials

President Clinton emphasizes the need for active participation in clinical research. (3.2MB)

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Tuskegee, Al c1940

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