

Sex and Herbs and Birth Control: Women and Fertility Regulation Through the Ages

Ann Hibner Koblitz



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Bromo Selzer douches, pregnancy protection amulets, pennyroyal teas, birch bark tampons, slippery elm sticks -- these are but a few of the myriad methods women in different parts of the world have used in their efforts to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Meanwhile, the obstacles they have had to confront have included religious proscriptions, punitive law codes, persecution of midwives, and the devaluing of folk knowledge. Sex and Herbs and Birth Control is a lively, provocative account of women's attempts to provide themselves with as wide a range of reproductive options as possible. Selective rather than encyclopedic, the book includes examples not only from the U.S. and western Europe, but also from Algeria, China, Cuba, El Salvador, India, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Vietnam, and elsewhere. The book contains original treatments of Margaret Sanger, the origins of forensic pathology and its ties to abortion, the complex meanings of pregnancy and its termination, and the shortcomings of demographers' discussions of fertility control.

Abortion is often an emotional issue in the political discourse of the United States and some other countries. This book includes a historically based examination of the attitudes toward abortion of different religious and cultural traditions through the ages.

The Institute for Humanities Research of Arizona State University, in selecting it for the 2015 Transdisciplinary Book Award, described it as a `groundbreaking book [that] takes the reader on a journey across time and space, investigating the always innovative (and occasionally surprising) approaches to women's health from India to Cuba... a fresh, insightful take on an age old problem... a wonderful example of truly transdisciplinary research and the amazing results of breaking down rigid disciplinary borders.'

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Marivel Tye:

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