

# HOW HISTORICAL MEDICAL WRONGDOINGS CONNECT TO CURRENT INEQUITIES

## A Present History

Examining past medical injustices is essential to understanding the current inequities in clinical trials and healthcare access. Marginalized communities have historically been subjected to unethical medical practices, contributing to long-term mistrust in the healthcare system.

## Key Historical Cases

1

### Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932-1972):

- The U.S. Public Health Service misled 600 Black men in Tuskegee, Alabama, into participating in a study on untreated syphilis.
- Despite the discovery of penicillin as a cure, treatment was withheld, and the study continued until a whistleblower exposed it in 1972.

2

### Guatemala Syphilis and Gonorrhea Experiments (1940s):

- American physicians deliberately infected hundreds of Guatemalan prisoners, soldiers, and orphans with syphilis and gonorrhea without their consent.
- The study aimed to understand disease transmission under unethical conditions.

3

### Henrietta Lacks and HeLa Cells (1950s):

- Without her consent, Henrietta Lacks' cervical cells were taken and used for medical research.
- Her cells led to breakthroughs in cancer treatment, polio vaccines, and more, yet her family received no financial benefits.
- Biotech firms profited significantly, with one company generating \$40 billion annually from products derived from her cells.

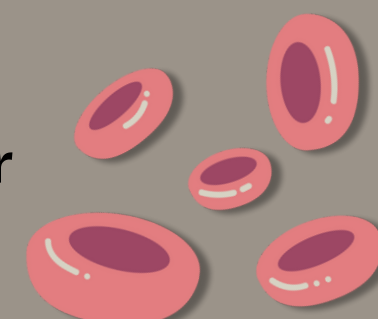
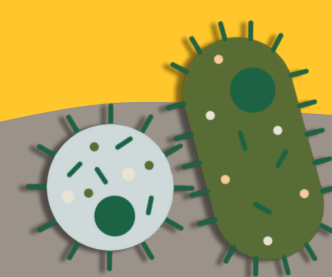
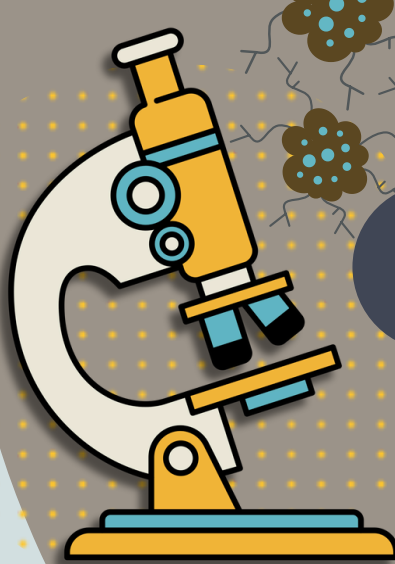
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### Exploitation of Black Women in Gynecology:

- Dr. James Sims conducted surgical experiments on enslaved Black women without anesthesia, leading to medical advancements still in use today.
- Dr. François Marie Prevost performed experimental C-sections on enslaved women in French colonies.

## Lasting Consequences

- **Medical Mistrust:** Historical abuses have created deep skepticism toward medical institutions, discouraging marginalized groups from participating in clinical trials.
- **Healthcare Disparities:** Systemic racism and economic inequities continue to impact healthcare access and quality.
- **Profit-Driven Medical Research:** The commercialization of medical discoveries often excludes those who were exploited in the research process.



## A Better Path Forward:

To build trust and ensure equitable healthcare, medical research and clinical trials must be conducted ethically, with informed consent and inclusivity at the forefront. Addressing historical wrongdoings is key to creating a more just healthcare system.