

February 2024 Newsletter: Focus on Heart Health

A Note from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This month, we are looking at heart health from a feminist perspective. It may seem obvious that our hearts are critical to our overall health. It's not only that heart disease is the number one cause of death for women. But women in the USA are affected differently than men when it comes to heart health. For example, women are under particular pressure to protect our hearts in a single way: lose weight. Fatphobia and toxic diet culture, prevalent in and out of the clinical setting, conspire to put women on a dieting treadmill that actually harms our physical and mental health, including the health of our hearts. Further, most research on heart health and disease has excluded women, so that women with heart disease continue to be misdiagnosed and mistreated. Our Bodies Ourselves Today is committed to providing women and gender-expansive people with the resources we need to educate and empower ourselves around heart health and heart disease prevention. From our hearts to yours.



Onward!
Amy

Explore Our Resources

Eight Facts about Heart Disease in Women

Heart disease remains the number one cause of death for women in the United States, but many don't realize that heart disease is their greatest risk. This article brings awareness of the ways women are especially vulnerable to heart disease.



[Read More about Women's Heart Health](#)

Meet Our Content Experts

Dara Lee Lewis, Heart Health chair



I'm Dara Lee Lewis, and I'm a noninvasive adult cardiologist. I work at the Lown Cardiology Group, which is affiliated with Brigham and Women's, and I teach at Harvard Medical School. I run the women's cardiology program at the Lown Group, so I take care of a lot of women with heart troubles.

The heart health expert panel includes patients who are living with heart disease, and they provide an invaluable patient perspective. We also have a few cardiology doctors -- some in training, some who are more experienced. They provide an educational viewpoint and insights from research. Anne Pollock, who is an academic, studies heart health more from a sociological, anthropological lens, and that's super cool. So it's so fun when we all get together, and we can all bring our own perspectives to this.

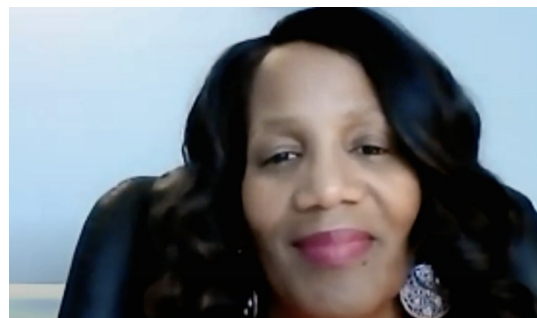
Of particular importance to the panel is the spectrum from prevention to how to treat it once you're really quite sick. It's a pyramid, and everyone benefits from discussing prevention and even risk factors. So, once you have diabetes, high blood pressure, all that, you want to treat those. But even before you get those, can't we all do better? I know I can be better about getting sleep, exercising, and taking care of ourselves. So that would be our most important public health message.

[Learn More about Dara](#)

A Personal Story about Heart Failure

Becoming a Heart Health Advocate

TC shares her experience being diagnosed with heart failure and becoming an advocate. TC is a congestive heart patient who has dilated and systolic congestive heart failure. She discusses the respiratory symptoms that resulted in an urgent care visit, being diagnosed, and learning that congestive heart failure runs in her family.



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"At Your Cervix" Documentary

"At Your Cervix" follows filmmaker and sexuality educator, A'magine, as she exposes how medical and nursing students are often taught on unconscious patients without their knowledge or consent. Interviews with students, patients, doctors, midwives, politicians and advocates provide compelling and often deeply emotional testimony as to why nonconsensual and unethical pelvic exams on patients under anesthesia must end.

"At Your Cervix" goes inside OB/GYN medical education programs and looks at the way their racist and sexist legacy of exploitation has created a culture of non-consent in gynecology. Starting with the inception of the OB/GYN profession, whose founder, Dr. Marion Sims, experimented on vulnerable, enslaved Black women, this oppressive legacy continues.

The film offers an empowering solution that will revolutionize how pelvic exams are taught and performed in schools and clinics across the country.

"At Your Cervix" Simmons University Film Screening

February 22, 2024
4:00–6:00pm EST
Simmons University
300 Fenway
Boston, MA 02115

Documentary film screening followed by a panel discussion which will be moderated by Our Bodies Ourselves Today Executive Director Amy Agigian and feature the filmmaker and sexuality educator, A'magine, Our Bodies Ourselves founder Judy Norsigian, Dr. Michele David, and other local scholars and activists. Sponsored by Our Bodies Ourselves Today!

[Register to Attend the Simmons Screening](#)

"At Your Cervix" MIT Film Screening

February 23, 2024
6:00–8:30pm EST
Bartos Theater at MIT
20 Ames Street, Building E15-070

Cambridge, MA 02142

Documentary film screening followed by a Q&A discussion with the filmmaker and sexuality educator, A'magine, Our Bodies Ourselves Today Program Director Laura Prieto, and other panelists, followed by a light reception.

[Register to Attend the MIT Screening](#)

Writing for Our Lives: A Wikipedia Editathon

March 6, 2024

12:00–1:30pm EST remote

2:00–3:30pm EST Samia Academic Center 316 at
Suffolk University 20 Somerset Street, Boston, MA
02108



On March 6, 2024, Our Bodies Ourselves Today will host its first ever Women's History Month edit-a-thon to help address systemic bias, close the information gender gap, and make women's history more visible on Wikipedia.

Our theme this year is Writing for our Lives, and we are collaborating with Professor Katherine Horn's Queer Narratives class at Suffolk University.

The event is free and open to all. Join us for some information activism, whether or not you've ever edited Wikipedia entries before!

[Join the Editathon](#)



Remembering Adele E. Clark

Dr. Adele E. Clarke, MA, PhD, (1945–2024) was a feminist scholar-activist who made great contributions to both the academic field of women's health and the women's health movement. She was Professor Emerita of Sociology and History of Health Sciences at the University of California, San Francisco, where she had been a faculty member since 1985. Adele's relationship with Our Bodies Ourselves spanned decades. She contributed to many editions of "Our Bodies, Ourselves" as a writer and reader, served on the Advisory Board of Suffolk University's Master of Arts in Women's Health program, and provided invaluable input regarding Our Bodies Ourselves Today, especially in the areas of abortion and contraception.

Rest in Power, Adele. It is an honor to carry on our shared work.

[Read More about Adele's Contribution to Women's Health](#)

Organizing for Change: Women's Heart Health



Understanding Racial Inequalities

Content Expert Anne Pollock's work explores the topics of science, technology, and medicine through a feminist and antiracist lens. She has authored three books: "**Medicating Race: Heart Disease and Durable Preoccupations with Difference**" (2012), "**Synthesizing Hope: Matter, Knowledge, and Place in South African Drug Discovery**" (2019), and "**Sickening: Anti-Black Racism and Health Disparities in the United States**" (2021). "Medicating Race" addresses the intersections of race and heart disease as it relates to the pharmaceutical industry, "Synthesizing Hope" traces the process of drug discovery of a South African startup pharmaceutical company, and "Sickening" examines the ways that anti-Black racism affects Black people's health.

Advocating for Patients & Peer Support

Content Expert Maggie Teliska, PhD is a Mayo Clinic-trained patient volunteer providing peer support and community education about heart disease in women. As part of her advocacy work, she created a Congestive Heart Failure Support Group on Facebook that now has over 20,000 members.



[Join the Facebook Group](#)

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