



Acres of Skin: Human Experiments at Holmesburg Prison

By Allen M. Hornblum

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At a time of increased interest and renewed shock over the Tuskegee syphilis experiments, *Acres of Skin* sheds light on yet another dark episode of American medical history. In this disturbing expose, Allen M. Hornblum tells the story of Philadelphia's Holmesburg Prison.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Relying on prisoners' firsthand reports, Hornblum (urban studies, Temple Univ.) has written a thorough account of the questionable medical experimentation carried out in Philadelphia's Holmesburg Prison from the mid-1940s to 1974. Research on everything from cosmetics to chemical warfare agents was conducted there, often with minimal or no record keeping. Such research raises serious ethical issues. Throughout, Hornblum asks whether prisoners can give informed consent, particularly when the potential consequences of the research are not fully explained. Although most of the book centers on Holmesburg, Hornblum does cite other prisons across the country where similar practices took place before they received widespread condemnation in the 1970s. What is shocking about this is that it did not happen in the distant past but in our own generation, with the doctors involved still in practice. Frighteningly, Hornblum reveals that at the Nuremberg trials Nazi doctors cited American prison practices as a defense for their nefarious medical experiments in the camps. Essential for students of medical ethics. A Eric D. Albright, Duke Medical Ctr. Lib., Durham, NC

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From [Booklist](#)

Thanks in good part to the Freedom of Information Act (and many interviews, too), Hornblum tells the story of medical experiments, ended in 1974, on prisoners in a Philadelphia prison. Most of the experiments involved the effects of chemicals on the skin (hence the title), but they also included military trials, stopped in 1966, of LSD and other mind-altering drugs. Dermatologist Albert M. Kligman and those prison administrators who knew about the experiments always claimed that no prisoners were coerced, informed consent was required, and any prisoner could withdraw from any experiment at any time. Hornblum punches holes in each of those statements. He compares some of the experiments with those of Nazi doctors during World War II, showing how, in one case, a Nazi physician apparently saved his life by describing some of the U.S. prison experiments to the judges in the Nuremberg trials. A low-keyed but devastating picture of U.S. medical experimentation and the men, educational institutions, and drug companies that carried it out. *William Beatty*

Review

"This admirably comprehensive story of the use of prisoners for medical research is embarrassingly painful to read... This encyclopedic, well-documented treatise....is a fascinating story
."

-"Journal of the American Medical Association

"Hornblum's book is awesome, revealing the sanctimonious venality of American medicine....Excellent!
Highly recommended
."

-"Choice

"Admirably comprehensive story of the use of prisoners for medical research...Acres of Skin" is the result of exhaustive scholarship...a comprehensive anthology of the use of prisoners for medical experimentation in other U.S. prisons and universities...This encyclopedic, "well-documented treatise is a fascinating story...Hornblum has recalled for all of us a history of abominable medical research and has given us all the opportunity to reflect on where we were when they experimented on prisoners and where we will be in the next ethical dilemma in medical"science
."

- "Journal of the American Medical Association

"A recently released expose has sparked new interest in this controversial chapter of American medical history

."

- "Village Voice

"A startling new book

."

- "Philadelphia Tribune

Users Review

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Rosalie Lloyd:

This Acres of Skin: Human Experiments at Holmesburg Prison are reliable for you who want to certainly be a successful person, why. The explanation of this Acres of Skin: Human Experiments at Holmesburg Prison can be on the list of great books you must have is definitely giving you more than just simple looking at food but feed anyone with information that perhaps will shock your preceding knowledge. This book is usually handy, you can bring it just about everywhere and whenever your conditions in e-book and printed kinds. Beside that this Acres of Skin: Human Experiments at Holmesburg Prison giving you an enormous of experience like rich vocabulary, giving you tryout of critical thinking that we understand it useful in your day action. So , let's have it and enjoy reading.

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