

## BACKGROUND

### Event Details

Date: April 24, 2008

Time: 6:30pm-10:00pm

Place: Paetzold Auditorium, Vancouver General Hospital

Cost: Free, but space is limited (live webcast also available)

RSVP: [www.whrn.ca](http://www.whrn.ca) / 604 707 6378

Over the past four decades, there has been a huge increase in women's health knowledge thanks to organizations like Our Bodies Ourselves. The tradition of women learning from women continues today, as the interplay between science and women's lived experiences continues to grow. This is illustrated locally by the three Vancouver-based organizations that have partnered to sponsor an evening in celebration of the growth of women's health research.

The co-sponsors of the evening, taking place April 24<sup>th</sup>, are the Women's Health Research Network, the Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research, and the Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology. These organizations represent the many who continue to carry the "health information torch" that was lit almost 40 years ago around a kitchen table in Boston. By supporting research and sharing knowledge, organizations such as these continue to influence the health of women, families, and communities.

"Education is the most powerful tool for lifting the plight of women worldwide," says Judy Norsigian, the executive director of OBOS. "Access to information directly impacts a woman's ability to not only control her reproductive life, but her overall health as well. We're alarmed by government cutbacks in developing countries that are preventing women from getting basic health care. OBOS' Global Translation/Adaptation Program is unique because with each new publication of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, women's health advocates around the world work to **tell their own stories in their own voices** as they share their knowledge."

Limited access to culturally appropriate and reliable information about health and sexuality, along with poverty, lack of education, and social and religious traditions that can restrict access to certain kinds of knowledge powerfully impact health status worldwide. OBOS' Global Translation/Adaptation Program is driven by the belief that all women have the right to culturally appropriate information that educates and empowers them. To this end, the program's Boston-based staff provides technical assistance to women's groups in other countries as they translate and culturally adapt the so-called *Bible of women's health* for distribution, outreach and advocacy in their own regions.

Norsigian adds, "Currently, the coordinating group in Nigeria, Women for Empowerment Development and Gender Reform, is adapting *Our Bodies, Ourselves* into alternative formats for wide-scale community education, reaching approximately 500,000 girls and women of varying literacy levels annually. It's amazing a booklet originating from the 1970s continues to have such a profound impact on the lives of women, not only nationally, but internationally as well."

"In order to increase access to these global editions for immigrant women in the United States, we distributed the published Armenian, Bulgarian, Japanese and Serbian books to organizations across the U.S. serving these immigrant communities," said Sally Whelan, OBOS co-founder and Global Translation/Adaptation Program Manager. "Program staff receiving the books at cultural and community centers, refugee resettlement organizations, state agencies and ecumenical service centers have indicated that OBOS adaptations will be used in their medical advocacy programs, domestic violence workshops, preventive health education, adjustment/trauma counseling and youth and elderly services."

To date, there are 29 *Our Bodies, Ourselves* translations or adaptations in 23 languages, including Russian, Spanish, French, Polish, and Albanian. New and ongoing projects are currently underway in India, Nepal, Nigeria, Israel, and Turkey.

### Our Bodies, Ourselves

Founded in 1969 after a group of Boston-based women met at a local women's conference, the Boston Women's Health Book Collective (also known as Our Bodies Ourselves) wrote the first edition of the landmark book, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, in 1970. The eighth edition (2005) as well as other publications and online resources by this nonprofit organization continue the tradition

of providing accurate noncommercial information about women's health and sexuality. For more information, visit [www.ourbodiesourselves.org](http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org).

### **Our Bodies, Ourselves Global Translations and Adaptations Program**

Over the years Our Bodies Ourselves (OBOS) has been involved in the development of 29 editions in diverse languages worldwide, all of which have made evidence-based information on women's health and rights available in communities where such information is scarce or altogether lacking. Most recently, women's groups in East Africa, Albania, Russia, South Korea, and Tibet have produced new publications in book and other formats.

### **The Women's Health Research Network**

The goal of the Women's Health Research Network ([www.whrn.ca](http://www.whrn.ca)) is to increase research activity focused on girls' and women's health in British Columbia and to influence research, policy, and practice by enabling all health researchers in British Columbia to apply a sex, gender, and diversity lens to their work. The WHRN is one of eight **Health of Population Networks** funded by the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research.

### **The Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research**

The Centre for Menstrual Cycle and Ovulation Research (CeMCOR) is focused on reframing women's health within a science-based, woman-centred context. It is doing pivotal research on ovulation, women's experiences across the menstrual cycle, the scientific effects of extended or "cycle-stopping" hormonal contraception, the inherited connection of PCOS (Anovulatory Androgen Excess) and a congenital eye disease known as aniridia, and the effects of progesterone on hot flushes and heart health. As new health knowledge is created it becomes available in plain language on an attractive, accessible and widely-read website: [www.cemcor.ubc.ca](http://www.cemcor.ubc.ca). CeMCOR has an endowment fund through the University of British Columbia to ensure the future of this innovative research for women.

### **The Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology**

The Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology ([www.scwist.ca](http://www.scwist.ca)) promotes, encourages, and empowers women working in science and technology. SCWIST coordinates and develops events for girls, young female undergraduates, graduates, and post-docs, women who are established in their careers, and scientific women who have immigrated to Canada. SCWIST offers student and professional membership, and welcomes donations from people who want to make a difference for women in science.

### **What people are saying:**

*In Turkish, there is no volume that brings together information about all aspects of women's health. Books about women's health are not woman-positive and/or designed to be used by women. Of all the books we have looked at, OBOS is the one volume that provides a model that fills the above needs. We want women to say, "I read a book, and it changed my life!"*

-Mavi Kalem, Istanbul, Turkey

*For centuries the Armenian woman's modesty has been a kind of restriction...Now this book... sincerely talks to us on the topics we would like to know...This comprehensive book helps us to know our body, prevents unwanted pregnancies, suggests solving many problems of sexuality...it has encyclopedic value for us, and for socially vulnerable Armenian women it will serve as a handbook.*

-Berd Women's Committee, Tavush Province, Armenia

*...much of the vocabulary you so creatively developed [in the Japanese OBOS] for talking about women's bodies is now included in the newest dictionaries for the Japanese language.*

-A researcher in The Netherlands communicating with the Japanese coordinating group,  
Shokado Women's Bookstore

### **Media Contact**

Wendy Brovold

phone: 617 451 3666 x 13

email: [wendy@bwhbc.org](mailto:wendy@bwhbc.org)

OBOS Executive Director Judy Norsigian is available for interviews.

### **Distribution courtesy of Marketwire.**