



A program of the Center for Health Humanities and Ethics  
University of Virginia School of Medicine

Provided by the University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing

Wednesday, 12 October 2022  
12:00-1:00 p.m. (EDT)

**In Person at Pinn Hall Conference Center Auditorium**

**Zoom Webinar:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83476598449>

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## **The Purpose of the Pelvic Exam: A Historical Analysis**

Wendy Kline PhD (Speaker)

Dema G. Seelye Chair in the History of Medicine, Director, Medical Humanities Program at Purdue,  
Department of History, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

Dominique Tobbell, PhD (Moderator)

Professor and Director of the Eleanor Crowder Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry, UVA  
School of Nursing

Ever since the introduction of the pelvic exam as a gynecological procedure in the late nineteenth century, consumers and doctors have struggled to define the boundaries between preventive health and sexual impropriety. In the early twentieth century, for example, cancer awareness programs were stymied by the failure of the press to print particular words deemed “inappropriate,” such as “uterus, cervix, discharge, bloody, or menses.” And despite the emergence of second wave feminism in the 1970s, discomfort around discussing female sex organs remains a major problem, even leading to a state representative getting banned from speaking on the Michigan House floor after using the term “vagina” in 2012. This shaming of women’s reproductive anatomy takes a toll on all women, who have picked up the cue that they, too, should remain silent about their bodies. Researchers have documented the impact this silencing has had on women’s care, including a lack of basic anatomical knowledge and the importance of routine gynecological care. In a 2017 US study, for example, only about half of women surveyed about cervical cancer screening felt they knew the purpose of the routine pelvic exam.

This talk suggests that the pelvic exam is more than just a medical procedure; it is a window into a deeper, more meaningful set of questions about gender, medicine, and power. From gynecological research on enslaved women’s bodies to practice on anesthetized patients, the pelvic exam as we know it today carries the burden of its history. By looking through that window, we can begin to understand why the pelvic exam remains both mysterious and contentious.

*Co-presented with the History of the Health Sciences Lecture Series, and The Eleanor Crowder Bjoring Center for Nursing Historical Inquiry of the UVA School of Nursing*

### Resources:

1. Wendy Kline, “The Exam Room Secrecy that Puts Women at Risk,” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/06/01/the-exam-room-secrecy-that-puts-women-at-risk/>

2. Wendy Kline, *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave* (University of Chicago Press, 2010)

Course Description: The Medical Center Hour is the School of Medicine's biweekly public forum on medicine and society. Produced by the Center for Health Humanities and Ethics, the series includes History of the Health Sciences Lectures co-presented with Historical Collections in the Claude Moore Health Sciences Library. The series is also home to several other annual lectures of the Schools of Medicine and Nursing.

Target Audience: Physicians, Nurses, other Health professionals, students, and the public

Desired Outcomes:

At the conclusion of this activity, participants should be able to:

- Discuss expert-level content of current, sometimes controversial issues in health, ethics, and society that directly affects interprofessional clinical practice
- Apply of knowledge and skills across medicine and allied humanities and sciences related to interdisciplinary and Interprofessional approaches to issues and problem solving
- Utilize multiple perspectives such as social, historical, cultural, ethical, legal, religious/spiritual, and artistic to view their influence on medicine, clinical practice, and the health of the public
- Transfer knowledge into community-based and clinical approaches to health improvement, utilizing the health humanities and ethics through their exploration in these learning sessions

### Accreditation & Designation Statements



In support of improving patient care, the University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing is jointly accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), to provide continuing education for the healthcare team.

The University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing designates this live activity for a maximum of **1 AMA PRA Category 1 Credit**.™ Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

The University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing awards **1 contact hour** for nurses who participate in this educational activity and complete the post activity evaluation.

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### Disclosure(s):

The following speakers and planning committee have no personal or professional financial relationships with a commercial entity producing healthcare goods and/or services. Speakers: Wendy Kline PhD; Planning Committee: Jim Childress, PhD; Marcia Childress, PhD; R.J. Bonnie, LLB; R. Carpenter, DrNP; Mary Faith Marshall, PhD; Justin Mutter, MD, MSc; Kathryn Reid, PhD, APRN, FNP-BC, CNL; Lois Shepherd, JD.

### Disclosure of faculty financial affiliations:

The University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing as a Joint Accreditation Provider adhere to the ACCME Standards for Integrity and Independence in Accredited Continuing Education, released in December 2020, as well as Commonwealth of Virginia statutes, University of Virginia policies and procedures, and associated federal and private regulations and guidelines. As the accredited provider for this CE/IPCE activity, we are responsible for ensuring that healthcare professionals have access to professional development activities that are based on best practices and scientific integrity that ultimately supports the care of patients and the public.

All individuals involved in the development and delivery of content for an accredited CE/IPCE activity are expected to disclose relevant financial relationships with ineligible companies occurring within the past 24 months (such as grants or research support, employee, consultant, stock holder, member of speakers bureau, etc.). The University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing employ appropriate mechanisms to resolve potential conflicts of interest and ensure the educational design reflects content validity, scientific rigor and balance for participants. Questions about specific strategies can be directed to the University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing of the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.

The faculty, staff, CE Advisory Committee and planning committee engaged in the development and/or peer review of this CE/IPCE activity in the Joint Accreditation CE Office of the School of Medicine and School of Nursing have no financial affiliations to disclose.

### Disclosure of discussion of non-FDA approved uses for pharmaceutical products and/or medical devices

As a Joint Accreditation provider, the University of Virginia School of Medicine and School of Nursing, requires that all faculty presenters identify and disclose any off-label or experimental uses for pharmaceutical and medical device products. It is recommended that each clinician fully review all the available data on new products or procedures prior to clinical use.

**Wendy Kline, Ph.D.**, Dema G. Seelye Chair in the History of Medicine at Purdue University, is internationally recognized for her scholarship in the history of medicine, history of women's health and the history of childbirth. She is the author of three major books: *Coming Home: How Midwives Changed Birth* (Oxford University Press, 2019); *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave* (U. of Chicago Press 2010); and *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (U. of California Press, 2001). Her current book project, *Exposed: A History of the Pelvic Exam*, is under contract with Polity Press. She has appeared in the Netflix documentary, *Sex, Explained*, as well as the PBS documentary, *The Eugenics Crusade*, and will appear in the Showtime documentary, *Pharma*, in 2023. Her research has been funded by major fellowships, including a Fulbright Distinguished Scholar fellowship, a British Academy Fellowship, and a Huntington Fellowship. Kline is also a professional violinist. You can learn more about her at [www.wendykline.com](http://www.wendykline.com).

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**How to claim Continuing Education (CE) credit:**

Thank you for attending the Medical Center Hour on October 5, 2022

1. Go to [www.cmevillage.com](http://www.cmevillage.com).
2. Click on the "Learning Portal" button and select "CE Certificate".
3. Sign in with your email and password or create an account if you are a new user.
4. Enter CE Activity Code **144850** and click "Submit" and "Continue".
5. Complete the evaluation and click "Done".
6. Certificate Preparation; indicate the number of credits you wish to claim for attending this activity. Click "Submit"
7. Click "Print Certificate" or you can access later by visiting our website, Click "Learning Portal", Sign in at the top of the page and click "Credit History & Past Certificate".
8. For problems, contact the CME office at [uvacme@virginia.edu](mailto:uvacme@virginia.edu)

**PLEASE NOTE: The post activity evaluation will only be available for a 30 day period. Credit will not be issued after the evaluation period has closed.**

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Watch Medical Center Hour recordings at <https://www.youtube.com/user/UVAMCH>