

The 7th Norwegian Conference on the History of Science
Individual paper submission
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"We Did Not 'Menstruate' - We Had 'Stomach Pain'"
Norwegian Menstrual Experiences 1900-1980

Menstruation has historically been considered a taboo, also in Norway. Recently, a new international wave of menstrual activists, medical professionals, and advertising has argued that it is important to fight this taboo to counteract shame, embarrassment and pain. As part of this shift, menstrual history has been explored in many countries and cultures, including Scandinavia. This paper expands upon these histories, by presenting a biography of Norwegian menstruation in the twentieth century. It draws on women's stories from 1900 to 1980 from the Norwegian Ethnological Survey, and tracks their experiences in the years before, during and after commercially available products changed the menstrual experience for most Norwegian women and girls from 1945. Placing this in an international context, the article explores what this history can tell us about menstruation as a commercial, personal and science historical topic.

Keywords: Women's History; Twentieth century; Menstruation; Ethnography; Medicine

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Audio visual equipment:

Computer and projector to show Powerpoint presentation