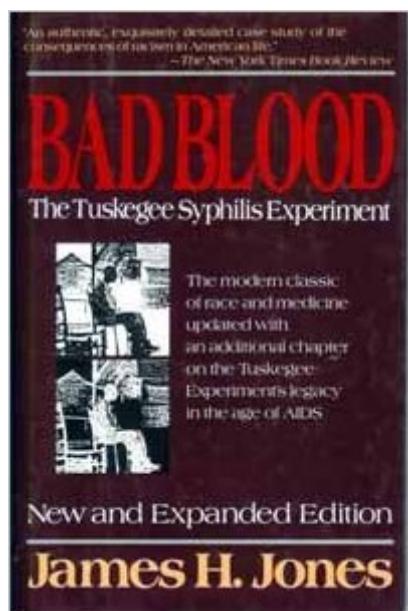


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# Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment



## Synopsis

From 1932 to 1972, the United States Public Health Service conducted a non-therapeutic experiment involving over 400 black male sharecroppers infected with syphilis. The Tuskegee Study had nothing to do with treatment. Its purpose was to trace the spontaneous evolution of the disease in order to learn how syphilis affected black subjects. The men were not told they had syphilis; they were not warned about what the disease might do to them; and, with the exception of a smattering of medication during the first few months, they were not given health care. Instead of the powerful drugs they required, they were given aspirin for their aches and pains. Health officials systematically deceived the men into believing they were patients in a government study of "bad blood", a catch-all phrase black sharecroppers used to describe a host of illnesses. At the end of this 40 year deathwatch, more than 100 men had died from syphilis or related complications. "Bad Blood" provides compelling answers to the question of how such a tragedy could have been allowed to occur. Tracing the evolution of medical ethics and the nature of decision making in bureaucracies, Jones attempted to show that the Tuskegee Study was not, in fact, an aberration, but a logical outgrowth of race relations and medical practice in the United States. Now, in this revised edition of "Bad Blood", Jones traces the tragic consequences of the Tuskegee Study over the last decade. A new introduction explains why the Tuskegee Study has become a symbol of black oppression and a metaphor for medical neglect, inspiring a prize-winning play, a Nova special, and a motion picture. A new concluding chapter shows how the black community's wide-spread anger and distrust caused by the Tuskegee Study has hampered efforts by health officials to combat AIDS in the black community. "Bad Blood" was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and was one of the "N.Y. Times" 12 best books of the year.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The New York Times Book Review As an authentic, exquisitely detailed case study of the consequences of racism in American life, this book should be read by everyone who worries about the racial meanings of government policy and social practice in the United States. The Washington Post Book World This is a valuable, superbly researched, fair-minded, profoundly troubling, and clearly written book. C. Vann Woodward Author of *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* *Bad Blood* is an important book, an authentic and appalling study of how the educated deliberately deceived and betrayed the uneducated in our own times through a government agency. "Benjamin Hooks Executive Director, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People *Bad Blood* is a shocking and bold report of scientific cruelty and moral idiocy...The moral and ethical questions this book raises come into sharp focus and are compelling. James T. Patterson Author of *The Dread Disease: Cancer & Modern American Culture* By eschewing sensationalism, Jones offers a compelling narrative that enhances our understanding of race relations in the twentieth-century South, of professionalism in medicine, and of American liberalism. *Bad Blood* deserves to win a prize. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

James H. Jones is associate professor of history at the University of Houston. He lives in Houston, Texas. He received his Ph.D. in history from Indiana University and has held a Kennedy Fellowship in Bioethics at Harvard University, served as a senior research fellow at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University, and recently held senior fellowships from both the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Rockefeller Foundation. He published the first edition of *Bad Blood* in 1981 to critical acclaim. It was a Main Selection of the History Book Club and a New York Times Best Books of 1981 and has inspired a play, a PBS Nova special, and a motion picture. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"*Bad Blood*" is a carefully researched and excellently written account of one of the most horrendous and despicable acts perpetrated by the United States Government, the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. In 1932, four hundred illiterate and semi-literate black sharecroppers in Alabama who were diagnosed with syphilis were selected for an experiment sponsored by the U.S. Health

Service, whose purport was to demonstrate that the course of untreated syphilis runs differently in blacks as opposed to whites. It was "race medicine" of the worst kind and, as a newspaper editorial stated when the experiment finally came to light 40 years later, it was ethically on a par with the medical experiments in the Nazi death camps. The men selected for the study were for the most part uneducated (only one man had reached the eighth grade and none had gone to high school), they were never explained the purpose of the study, and they were given no medicine to help their advancing symptoms. Even after penicillin was found in the 1940s to halt or significantly reduce the symptoms of the disease, it was withheld from the patients, who were left to suffer horrible deaths from advanced syphilis one by one. In 1972 the experiment was finally brought into the open by a young law student who passed the information to the Associated Press, and when the story broke on Page One of newspapers across the country, it caused a national firestorm. Journalists, public officials, and ordinary citizens were outraged by the news accounts. Incredibly, when the doctors involved in the experiment were asked for an accountability, their response was a collective shrug and a "so what?" The most explosive reaction, needless to say, was in the nation's black communities, which maintained that the government would never have run such an experiment on 400 white test subjects. The bitter legacy left by the Tuskegee Experiment is the fear and mistrust among many African-Americans of the entire medical establishment, and the suspicion that AIDS is a man-made disease created by the government with the express purpose of killing off blacks and gays; people who hold this belief, when asked why they think the government would do such a thing, invariably point to the Tuskegee Experiment as an example of what the government is capable of. The legacy of suspicion and mistrust generated by the Tuskegee Experiment may take generations to undo, and all of us, black and white, will be the losers. Judy Lind

An excellent discussion of the infamous Tuskegee experiment, which is notorious for its lack for regard for human rights. This book will help you to understand why the black community is mistrustful of outsiders coming to 'help' them, although you may be left wondering how on earth the doctors of the PHS could justify their actions to themselves, and keep on denying men the treatment they needed.

To think that medical personnel could conduct such an experiment, and that the collusion with it extended far and wide almost requires a willing suspension of disbelief. Illiterate, indigent individuals were persuaded to participate in a study of the progress of syphilis for nothing more than a modest burial payment. Black and white doctors and nurses, medical professionals at the federal, state, and

local levels, were involved in this experiment, to the utter disgrace of every one who took part. Leading men of the day thought it was perfectly okay to continue the experiment and to leave the subjects untreated even after the discovery that penicillin would likely have cured them of the disease. The fact that the experiment did not end until some forty years ago suggests that racism was at its heart and core. These men were simply expendable, and this fine book illuminates it all.

The "study" of the natural history of syphilis in black men is important to understand. Because it involved US federal funds and US federal researchers, it was a key demonstration that serious ethical problems in research were a mainstream event rather than a fringe problem; awareness of this project fueled concern for regulatory oversight and led to the development of federal regulations. James Jones' revelations were key to this process, and everyone involved in human subjects' research should read this book. Overall, the book is well researched and well presented. One of the more frightening aspects of Tuskegee is subtle, and doesn't get as thorough a treatment as it could have; that is, some of the outrageous features of the project were not the result of single outrageous decisions, but were rather the sum of many smaller errors. These are harder for a researcher to dismiss as things s/he could never have done. As a physician, I can comfortably say that I would never deliberately deny effective therapy to someone with a serious illness. But I can not as glibly say that I would have been the one to stand up and rebel when a protocol committee in the late 1940s or early 1950s decided that the evidence for penicillin's effectiveness in advanced syphilis was not QUITE good enough to mandate terminating the project. There are also some rough spots in some of the technical information, most glaringly a rather startlingly inaccurate description of what's involved in a spinal tap. Those are small issues, though. Overall, this is an excellent book that makes it abundantly clear why Tuskegee is so important to our thinking about research ethics, and helps the reader understand why certain racial and ethnic groups have a distrust of medical research.

If you reaaaaaaaaally like biological or medical ethics then THIS IS THE BOOK FOR YOU. Otherwise you should probably find something less monotonous.

great book, sad sunject

If you want to know the full details of this experiment, this is the book you want to read! I got it for class, but this book is so useful and informational I didn't sell it after the class was done.

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