



Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine Announces Fellowships

Philadelphia – June 12, 2010. The Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine (FHWIM), along with their current fellowship partner, The Archives for Women in Medicine at the Center for the History of Medicine, Countway Library, Harvard Medical School, Boston (AWM), is pleased to announce two fellowships which have been granted for research related to the history of women in medicine.

This year's fellowships have been awarded to two outstanding candidates: Sarah Rodriguez, PhD, Senior Research Fellow in Medical Humanities, Northwestern University and Joan Marie Johnson, PhD, Lecturer, Northeastern University. FWHIM is looking forward to seeing the products of these two research projects, since they are using some of the same archival collections to uncover the stories of two different women pioneers, who contributed to the advancement of reproductive medicine in very different ways.

Sarah Rodriguez's project, *Miriam Menkin and the Roots of Reproductive Medicine*, will focus on Miriam Menkin's role in the history of reproductive medicine. Miriam Menkin was the lab assistant to John C. Rock, widely considered one of the founders of reproductive medicine. Though Menkin received first name authorship on one of their groundbreaking articles on human in vitro fertilization (1948), Menkin remains largely unknown outside of the study of the history of reproduction, while Rock became essentially a household name. Rock's papers include Menkin's research and lab notebooks, correspondence, conference notes, interview transcripts, and three boxes of Menkin's own personal and professional papers, 1918-1979.

Dr. Rodriguez states “*I will uncover this unsung heroine's own story to reveal her role in the history of reproductive medicine. I will examine her within the context of her role as a bench scientist, who, like so many other women of her era, conducted research as an assistant to a man, but I will also search for her own interest in reproductive medicine and how she perhaps influenced the direction of the reproductive medical research conducted under John Rock.*”

Dr. Rodriguez attended the University of Iowa for her BA in American Studies and the University of Wisconsin-Madison for her MA in the History of Science and Medicine. She obtained her PhD in Medical Sciences, Preventive and Societal Medicine, from the University of Nebraska Medical Center, and wrote her dissertation on the history of female circumcision and clitoridectomy in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century. She is currently a medical humanities postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern University where she is researching medical and popular understandings of women's reproductive health, in particular infertility.

Joan Marie Johnson's project, *Funding Research for the Birth Control Pill: Katherine Dexter McCormick, Feminism, and Women's Health*, will also be mining the papers of John C. Rock (as well as Walter B. Cannon, Loretta McLaughlin, and others) to uncover the story of a woman's

contribution to the advancement of reproductive medicine. Katherine McCormick, one of the first female graduates of MIT, was a philanthropist and early advocate for birth control, who ultimately funded the research conducted by John Rock and Gregory Pincus that produced the first birth control pill in the 1950s.

Dr. Johnson writes, *"This research will explore how McCormick's own scientific background influenced her interest in funding medical research as a strategy for obtaining better birth control methods. McCormick was in a unique position to enable researchers to conduct controversial medical research because of the independence that her wealth provided and her belief in the power of medical science to improve women's rights. She had the scientific knowledge necessary to understand the details of the research and kept in constant contact with Pincus and Rock."*

Dr. Johnson received her Ph.D. in American history from UCLA in 1997. She teaches American Women's history and Southern history at Northeastern Illinois University. She is the author of *Southern Women at the Seven Sister Colleges: Feminist Values and Social Activism, 1875-1915* (2008), *Southern Ladies, New Women: Race, Region and Clubwomen in South Carolina, 1898-1930* (2004), and the editor and author of the introduction to *Southern Women at Vassar: The Poppenheim Family Letters, 1882-1916* (2002). She has published articles on Southern women, race, reform, and education, and is the co-editor of a three volume historical anthology on South Carolina women, *South Carolina Women: Their Lives and Times*. Johnson is the co-founder and co-director of the Newberry Seminar on Women and Gender at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

The Foundation for the History of Women in Medicine was founded with the belief that knowing the historical past is a powerful force in shaping the future. FHWIM takes pride in preserving the past to influence the future and focuses on its mission, to promote and to preserve the history of women in medicine and the medical sciences.

Contact: Victoria Burkhart
FHWIM
PO Box 543
Pottstown, PA 19464
P: (610) 970-9143
F: (610) 970-7520