

Inspiring A Movement of Women's Health Around the World

Our Global Network Grows

by Sally Whelan, Program Manager

For three decades, women's organizations in every region of the world have found *Our Bodies, Ourselves* to be a trusted resource that combines women's testimonials with accurate health and medical information presented in accessible language. Articulating their need to have *OBOS* available in their own languages for the women of their country or region, groups continuously contact us for permission to translate or adapt it, as expressed by the coordinators of a forthcoming Korean edition:

In Korea the most important reason why we need to translate OBOS is because there still isn't a book in Korean written from a feminist perspective about women's bodies and sexuality that is equal in coverage and detail to OBOS. Now it is compulsory for elementary, middle and high school students to have 10 hours of sex education per year, and I believe that OBOS could serve as an excellent resource book for the teachers who will have to teach these classes. Moreover, we are convinced that OBOS will have a powerful and positive influence on women activists, as well as ordinary men and women.

– Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center, Seoul, South Korea
Korean *OBOS* expected publication date – October 2004

Most often groups pursue these projects with minimal resources and in the presence of significant

Some members of the Global *OBOS* Network at the 9th International Women and Health Meeting in Toronto, including Sally Whelan, Program Manager (far left) and *OBOS* co-founders Judy Norsigian and Jane Pincus (top row).



economic, political and social constraints. Our Global Translation/Adaptation Program helps reduce these barriers. We start with the transfer of publication rights for the token sum of one dollar, and provide technical assistance through all stages of each project as needs arise. We encourage alternative formats and adaptation of the text to address linguistic, cultural, political, and religious needs within the context of each country's health and medical system.

BOOKS FORTHCOMING IN 2004: Korean, Polish, French-African and Tibetan

This year the Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center and a group of young university women in Seoul completed a direct translation of *OBOS*. They are now engaged in a cultural adaptation, to be published in October 2004 and distributed through both conventional and online bookstores.

In Poland, the Network of East-West Women – Polska plans to put part of their *OBOS* adaptation on the Internet and is negotiating with a large media company about placing *OBOS* excerpts in the weekend magazine of a prestigious newspaper.

Notre Corps, Notre Santé, is an *OBOS*-inspired book for French-speaking women in 21 African countries. The coordinators, Groupe de Recherche sur Les Femmes et Les Lois au Senegal, chose a French publishing house specializing in authors and distribution channels in the Global South.

The Tibetan Nuns' Project in Dharamsala, India, supported by the Global Fund for Women, has almost completed a Tibetan book based on *OBOS* to enhance body awareness and teach basic health concepts to young Tibetan women. Coordinators will distribute the book to women throughout the Himalayan region and, if possible, to Tibetan women in exile.

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OUR BODIES OURSELVES

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Letter to Our Readers

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

This year, with your support, Our Bodies Ourselves has brought empowering health information to many new audiences. You can read about some of our successes in this newsletter. We plan to expand on these initiatives in 2004, but we need your support more than ever as we embark upon a critical transition:

- In the next two years, we plan to develop more reliable revenue streams from individuals, new books, and related educational materials, thereby reducing our dependency on foundation support, which has become much harder to secure.
- We will also emphasize our fundamental charge to produce reliable women's health information.

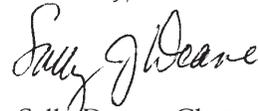
I am asking you to give generously and now, so that we can launch the next edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves (OBOS)* with our very first year-long promotional campaign. The campaign will combine typical book tour media appearances with campus- and community-based events that will reach out to a larger audience than ever before.

We are especially excited about initiatives that will feature both *OBOS 2005* and *Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas*, the Spanish-language cultural adaptation of *OBOS* that will undergo revision as soon as funds are secured. In addition, your contribution will enable us to support numerous *OBOS* translation/adaptation projects currently underway across the globe.

We are confident that *OBOS 2005* will be enthusiastically welcomed. We expect it to help pave the way to greater self-sufficiency, as will the revision of *Ourselves Growing Older* and subsequent titles on such topics as infertility and childbirth and new genetic technologies. But right now, the support of friends and colleagues like you is critical to our success.

From all of us at Our Bodies Ourselves, I thank you in advance.

Sincerely,



Sally Deane, Chair,
Board of Directors

Our Bodies Ourselves (also known as the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, Inc.)

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SPECIAL THANKS FOR RECENT SUPPORT FROM THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS:

Brigham and Women's Hospital,
Conservation Food and Health Foundation,
Eileen Fisher, Inc., The Ford Foundation,
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation,
Heinz Family Foundation

Strengthening Collaborations and Partnerships

by Zobeida Bonilla, Latina Health Initiative Program Manager

This past year, the Latina Health Initiative focused on supporting *promotoras de salud* in communities as far away as Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Denver, Colorado, and as close as our own Boston neighborhood.

Who are *promotoras de salud*?

Literally, they are promoters of health, but as the Spanish name suggests, they have a specific connection with Spanish-speaking communities. *Promotoras de salud* are familiar with the culture and language, and are aware of social, economic, migration, and political issues that affect community members' health. Supporting such health promoters can enhance preventive and primary care services for immigrant populations, minority groups, and low-income communities.

With support from a two-year grant from the Open Society Institute, the Latina Health Initiative has been able to develop a training guide and carry out more than a dozen workshops for *promotoras de salud* in collaboration with community-based groups across the country. In 2003, we visited friends, colleagues and sisters in Denver, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. We expanded our work from Boston and surrounding areas to the communities of Lynn and Northampton. We also continued to disseminate women's health information and advocacy tools through the Spanish-language section of our website.

In our workshops with *promotoras de salud*, we discussed issues affecting Latinas' health such as mental health, domestic violence, language barriers that affect access to health care, and health literacy issues. These gatherings also offered a space for critical reflection about

Workshop conducted by Zobeida Bonilla, Latina Health Initiative Program Manager, with the Avon Comadre Project at the University of Colorado at Denver (Maria Gavier, project coordinator).



government policies and funding cuts that affect access to health services for Latinas, especially for immigrant women. In some cases, the seminars led local groups to get more involved in advocacy efforts.

This year we also reframed the goals of the Latina Health Initiative within a human rights context. We promote the concept of health as a human right, especially among immigrant Latinas, and foster structures of health care that empower Latinas and help them overcome access barriers. This is critical now, as the health of women of color and immigrant women in particular faces serious threats.

In the coming year, we plan to initiate two exciting collaborative projects: the Community Health Centers Project and the *Seminarios de Salud y Derechos Reproductivos*. The Community Health Centers Project aims to improve Latina patients' access to valuable health information. At the same time, it will educate health care providers at participating centers about cultural practices and language factors that may affect the delivery of health care to Latina patients and other minority and ethnic groups.

The *Seminarios de Salud y Derechos Reproductivos* will be a biannual series of training seminars in

Spanish on reproductive health and rights for *promotoras de salud*. These seminars will cover such topics as immigrant women's health, overcoming barriers to health care access, policy issues regarding reproductive health services in the United States, and health care and reproductive needs of younger Latinas.

The next edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* now in progress will offer a tremendous opportunity in the coming year to begin the next update of *Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas*, building on the superb job of our Latina sisters from Latin America and the United States who worked on the 2000 edition. Also in 2004, we will be part of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health's Organizing Institute for Latinas and the first site to test its leadership curriculum. The Organizing Institute for Latinas will offer an exciting training opportunity for Latinas in Boston and a unique partnership through which we can expand and strengthen our advocacy work.

Feel free to contact me about any ideas you might have for the Latina Health Initiative and/or if you would like to partner/collaborate on any of our projects: zobeida@bwhbc.org. ■

Public Advocacy Updates

by Judy Norsigian, Executive Director

The credibility and reputation of Our Bodies, Ourselves has been central to establishing our organization as a key voice in policy, advocacy, and educational efforts related to women's health. During the past year, through media interviews, more than 40 speaking engagements, letters and op eds, and collaborations with other organizations, we have presented a feminist and consumer perspective on a range of issues including the following:

- Whether the FDA should approve a silicone gel implant produced by Inamed for general distribution and use (rather than restrict its use to clinical trials, as is now the case). We testified at the FDA panel hearing and worked with the media to argue that such approval is dangerously premature.
- Problems with direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs – so-called "DTC" ads, which are often misleading and inaccurate. We are part of the Prevention First Coalition (see www.preventionfirstcoalition.org), and continue to speak frequently to diverse audiences about the serious consequences of this three billion dollar a year advertising effort.
- The well-documented benefits of midwifery care, and the need to expand the midwifery model of care in most communities across the country. Ironically, this past year has witnessed the closing of several outstanding

midwifery practices, both in hospitals and free-standing birth centers, and we are working to reverse this disturbing trend.

- The emergence of a new tendency among some medical specialists to define women's sexual problems as primarily biomedical and thus requiring such solutions as Viagra-like drugs for women (rather than a host of tried-and-true approaches long used by sexuality counselors, educators and therapists). We are now part of the Campaign for a New View of Women's Sexual Problems, which is responding to media distortions regarding "female sexual dysfunction" (see www.fsd-alert.org for more information).
- The hormone therapy controversy resulting from some of the early findings in the Women's Health Initiative. With the new understanding that estrogen plus progesterone does NOT protect against heart disease, there have been considerable consternation and confusion, especially among those women who never needed to take estrogen for extreme hot flashes or other disruptive problems. Although there is still a clear and useful role for estrogen therapy among some women, many women still do not have access to balanced information during their decision-making regarding hormones.
- The controversy over human embryo cloning, a technique that can be used for either reproductive purposes

(producing a genetic duplicate human) or for research purposes (in pursuit of medical therapies). We support embryo stem cell research while at the same time calling for greater restraint with embryo cloning (see our website for our complete position statement and past Congressional testimony).

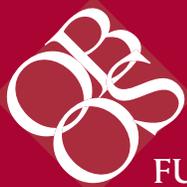
- The need to incorporate early abortion services, especially abortions performed with the drug combination of mifepristone and prostaglandin, into the primary care setting. We are working with other organizations and professionals to encourage community health centers, hospitals and others to include these services as part of basic primary health care.

Please go to our website for more details on any of these issues:

www.ourbodiesourselves.org.

In the next year, we plan to be active in these and other arenas. Whether working with writers at Teen Voices to publicize the findings of the American Legacy Foundation survey of young women regarding tobacco use or informing college students about exciting developments in microbiocide research (to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmissible infections), we bring our longstanding experience with and participation in both the scientific and advocacy community.

We welcome your ideas as well as feedback on our website postings. Please contact: judy@bwhbc.org or kiki@bwhbc.org. ■



FUNDING SOURCES

for fiscal year ending
Sept 30, 2003

Foundation Grants – new (32%)	\$ 182,000.
Foundation Grants – old (35%)	198,100.
Individual Donations/Charitable Trusts (19%)	105,638.
Book Royalties & Sales (10%)	57,866.
Speaking/Consulting (4%)	21,108.
Interest & Donated Goods & Services (<.5%)	2,443.
Total	<u>\$ 567,155.</u>

New Manager Launches *Our Bodies, Ourselves* Revision

by Heather Stephenson, OBOS Program Manager

When I got the call from Judy Norsigian last summer, I danced around the kitchen so happily that I scared the cat. I was thrilled to be asked to manage the revision of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

Since then, my enthusiasm has not abated, although I usually restrain myself from skipping around our offices in Boston's South End. After all, I'm shy. And I'm busy. Really busy.

Some numbers might help you see what I mean. Since I started work in early September, I have heard from more than 220 women who want to be part of the revision. I asked many of them to review chapters in the 1998 edition and recommend changes. Within three weeks, I received 91 sets of such comments.

In the meantime, I made a presentation to the board (16 members) and convened the first meeting of the editorial team (three members, including me). I interviewed three women and hired one to be the *Our Bodies, Ourselves* program assistant. I was also supervising two student interns.

In October, it was time for more. With the blessings of the editorial team, I started selecting women to revise the chapters of the book – 30 chapters this time around, some with as many as 10 people revising different sections within them. I also began talking with designers, photographers and officials at Simon & Schuster.

Did I mention that I'm shy?

The number of people I have met in my role as *Our Bodies, Ourselves* program manager and managing editor of the 2005 edition is astounding, even to an experienced journalist like me. But the real pleasure is not the quantity, but the quality.

These women are a talented bunch, from Dr. Adriane Fugh-Berman (author of *Alternative Medicine: What Works* and past chairwoman of the National Women's Health Network), who is revising the chapter on complementary medicine, to Elizabeth Lindsey, a self-described "23-year-old, working-class, African-American high femme" and recent Swarthmore College grad, who is creating a new chapter on sexual orientation and gender identity.

As January approaches, these revisers are busy updating chapters

on everything from body image to abortion. New first-person stories are being collected and new photographs taken. And I am meeting new people every day, people who share our vision of a book that brings frank, reliable information and diverse personal stories to a wide audience, educating and empowering women to make informed decisions about our medical care and to build healthier communities for everyone.

It's such an exciting vision. It still makes me want to dance. ■

OBOS Website Expands

Initiated in 1998, our website continues to serve as a starting point on the Internet for many people seeking unbiased, reliable women's health and sexuality information from a feminist perspective. This year we've added new content exploring controversial topics such as mammography, hormone therapy, and "female sexual dysfunction."

We are proud that our website is recognized as an important source of women's health information by both the CDC's Office for Women's Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Women's Health. In the coming year, we will both expand our current website and begin planning the new "companion website" for the 2005 edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

– Kiki Zeldes, Website Manager

Our Global Network Grows (continued from page 1)

OUTREACH WITH OBOS

EDITIONS:

Armenian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian and Spanish

After publication, coordinating groups often conduct special outreach and distribution to reach women in both central and remote areas. Readers in Tuvush Province, Armenia, describe the Armenian adaptation, now going into its second edition:

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

– Berd Women's Committee,
Tavush Province, Armenia
Armenian OBOS published 2001

OBOS editions in Eastern Europe, published in 2001 and 2002 in Bulgaria, Moldova and Serbia, are gaining the support of funders to achieve wider public access. The Women's Health Initiative in Bulgaria recently secured funding from the Global Fund for Women to use their book in community-based discussions throughout the country, and is seeking funds to distribute the book to Bulgarian emigrants in other Balkan countries.

The Soros Foundation, which has funded several OBOS adaptations through its "Women at Risk" translation grants, provided additional funds for every women's non-governmental organization in Moldova to receive a copy of the

2002 Romanian OBOS. The Autonomous Women's Center Against Sexual Violence in Belgrade, coordinator of the Serbian edition, worked this year with a colleague from the Netherlands to conduct train-the-trainers body awareness workshops in key locations throughout the country.

Through our own Latina Health Initiative (highlighted in this newsletter), we developed a comprehensive women's health training guide for use in workshops across the United States. The guide is based on *Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas*, the Spanish cultural adaptation of OBOS.

THE GLOBAL OBOS NETWORK

Periodically we organize meetings of groups producing adaptations to provide mutual learning opportunities and to facilitate communication among them rather than, as previously, one-on-one with us. Last year representatives from Brazil, Bulgaria, Japan, Moldova, India, Poland, Senegal, Turkey and the United States participated as a group in the 9th *International Women and Health Meeting* in Toronto. We presented our collective work to the wider women's health community, adopted the name of "Global OBOS Network," and conducted a Network meeting for the second consecutive year.

At this meeting two new member groups gained insights for their own project planning from the extensive experience of the OBOS Network. MUSA (Mulher e Saúde), a group whose leadership now consists of two generations of Brazilian feminists, is planning to launch a Portuguese edition. Mavi Kalem, in Istanbul, is in discussion with women's groups country-wide to make real their vision for a Turkish edition:

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

The Global OBOS Network and its meetings are especially important because member organizations are typically breaking new ground in their own countries with controversial subject matter and often find the work both challenging and isolating. Groups gain support from others doing similar work, as well as an affirmation that it is all right – and even necessary – to appreciably diverge from OBOS, the so-called "bible of women's health." This has freed many groups to expand the range of possible book models. Between meetings Network members communicate over *OBOSTRANS*, a list serv that we facilitate.

NEW PROJECTS

The Middle East, Nepal, Nigeria, Russia, Greece and Vietnam

Our workshop and display booth at Toronto inspired new groups to consider adapting women's health and sexuality material for their own cultures. As a result, Palestinian and Nepali women have recently contacted us about becoming coordinators for new editions.

A Palestinian women's group is interested in coordinating a regional effort to produce an Arabic edition for the Middle East. We will connect them with coordina-

tors of a 1991 Egyptian edition and with a young Moroccan woman who not only works in the area of religion, sexuality and gender training, but has also translated and begun to adapt the childbearing chapter in *OBOS*. She is gathering feedback on the chapter from Arabic-speaking women in five countries.

The Women's Rehabilitation Centre in Kathmandu is seeking funds to collaborate with the Institute for Human Rights and Communication as well as several community groups to produce a Nepali adaptation and a subsequent training guide. An organization representing the "untouchable" women of Nepal had been involved in a previous attempt to get a Nepali *OBOS* underway, and we have facilitated their involvement in this new project.

Women for Empowerment, Development and Gender Reform in Nigeria is launching a project in English, Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Plans include adapting *OBOS* for pamphlets, radio shows, street theater, and a poster/sticker campaign with simple health messages on the canoe transport system bringing women from farms to market. Sponsors have committed \$500 and an electric generator to the project; each member of the group will donate a portion of her salary.

Contingent on funding, the organization Women's Health in St. Petersburg (Russia) will combine *OBOS* with portions of a companion volume, *Sacrificing Ourselves for Love (SOFL)*. The coordinators plan to emphasize violence against women, a special focus of *SOFL* and a priority concern for the network of groups with whom they work.

To gauge interest in another potential project, we are talking

with Yvette Jarvis, basketball star and city councilor in Athens, Greece. She is helping to identify Greek women's organizations that may want to do a Greek revision, as the 1981 edition is now out of print.

Organizations in Vietnam are considering a comprehensive self-help book as well as a series of informational booklets based on *OBOS*. Colleagues in the United States who travel frequently to Hanoi are serving as liaisons.

SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Global *OBOS* Network groups pursue adaptations in the face of formidable obstacles, with scarce resources and sizeable commitments of volunteer labor. Our support and technical assistance help to make these ambitious projects manageable. Typically, we assist with such issues as publishing contracts, book models and other formats, controversial content, graphics, distribution strategies and funding.

Despite the variability of need from project to project, coordinators face many common challenges. We have addressed these issues in our recently developed *Guidelines for Translations and Adaptations of 'Our Bodies, Ourselves for the New Century,'* which synthesize what we and other organizations have learned from producing *OBOS* over the past 30 years. Another new tool, used for the first time by coordinators in Poland, is a CD-ROM of original *OBOS* graphics, which spares groups the time and exorbitant cost of obtaining these from our publisher.

As we gather new material for the 8th U.S. edition of *OBOS*, we will channel these updates to the *OBOS* Network, so that forthcoming adaptations will be as timely as

possible, and groups will have up-to-date content for their websites, media, policy and outreach work.

NEW INITIATIVES

In our newest initiative, we are *bringing OBOS back home* to immigrant women in the United States, increasing their access to rich sources of culturally adapted women's health information. We began this pilot program by identifying key organizations with the capacity to use the Japanese, Armenian, Bulgarian and Serbian books in their own programs and services, and will soon begin distribution.

In 2004, if funding is available, we plan to:

- Distribute the new Polish, Korean, French-African and Tibetan editions to areas of the United States with concentrations of these immigrant groups;
- Explore with overseas publishers and coordinators of adaptations the possibility of Internet access to selected excerpts from their books; and,
- Gain wider exposure for the adaptations through centers and institutes that specialize in dissemination of information in languages other than English, both in print and online.

With possibly six to eight adaptations of *Our Bodies Ourselves* starting up in the coming year, and with a demand for assistance that fully occupies our small staff, we must raise a minimum of \$75,000 for the Global Translation/Adaptation Program. Special thanks go to the Conservation Food and Health Foundation for its recent grant of \$22,000. We invite you to join the individuals and foundations essential to this effort. ■

OUR BODIES OURSELVES

34 Plympton Street
Boston, MA 02118

Welcome to Our Newest Board Members!

Nancy Forsyth is President of the college textbook publisher, Allyn & Bacon. Her personal publishing expertise has been in the areas of psychology and teacher education, and she has been active in a variety of women's organizations, including the National Women's History Museum and the National Organization for Women.

Penelope Riseborough is the Director of Communications for John Snow, Inc., and World Education, Inc. She has served in the past as communications director for JHPiego Corporation, Pathfinder Fund, and Management Sciences for Health. She has considerable management experience, especially in the family planning field.

Jayne Carvelli-Sheehan is Vice President of Ambulatory and Emergency Services at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. She also has had significant experience as a staff nurse and Director of Nursing. She has presented and published widely on improving the quality of health and medical care delivery.

Donna Soodalter-Toman is a consultant with vast experience and expertise in health care operations, strategic planning, marketing and organizational change management. She teaches courses at both the Harvard School of Public Health and Simmons Graduate School of Health Studies. She has served on the board of WHERE (Women for Health, Education, Reform and Equity), based in Seattle.

Host A Party for Your Friends!

Our house parties have generated lively discussion and networking, as well as a great means of expanding the circle of donors who support OBOS.

Please consider having an afternoon or evening event for friends and colleagues.

Contact the chair of the OBOS Development Committee, Fiona Smith (fionadsmith@hotmail.com), or OBOS Executive Director Judy Norsigian (judy@bwhbc.org).