



On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives, 1950-1970

Assoc.Prof. Elizabeth Siegel Watkins PhD

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"In 1968, a popular writer ranked the pill's importance with the discovery of fire and the developments of tool-making, hunting, agriculture, urbanism, scientific medicine, and nuclear energy. Twenty-five years later, the leading British weekly, the Economist, listed the pill as one of the seven wonders of the modern world. The image of the oral contraceptive as revolutionary persists in popular culture, yet the nature of the changes it supposedly brought about has not been fully investigated. After more than thirty-five years on the market, the role of the pill is due for a thorough examination." -- from the Introduction

In this fresh look at the pill's cultural and medical history, Elizabeth Siegel Watkins re-examines the scientific and ideological forces that led to its development, the part women played in debates over its application, and the role of the media, medical profession, and pharmaceutical industry in deciding issues of its safety and meaning. Her study helps us not only to understand the contraceptive revolution as such but also to appreciate the misinterpretations that surround it.

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