

# DES:

## A Population Health Tragedy

*Fifty years ago, 10 million American families (pregnant women and their fetuses) were exposed to DES.*

*Was your family one of them?*

### Are you interested in:

- **Reproductive rights?** Learn how DES was a mass experiment on millions of pregnant women without consent, and how scant reparations were later given to only some of these women, their children and grandchildren.
- **Advocacy and activism?** Learn about DES Action, one of the most successful grassroots organizations in US history.
- **Drug safety?** Learn how the FDA failed to protect us from DES.
- **Environmental issues?** The increasing use of endocrine disruptors.
- **Legal precedents for damage suits?** Statute of limitations and shared liabilities laws were changed due to DES lawsuits.
- **Gender, Sex and Sexuality?** The effects of DES and other endocrine disruptors on generations of individuals.



### What is DES?

DES (diethylstilbestrol) was the first synthetic estrogen and endocrine disruptor, originally intended to support “at risk” pregnancies. Poorly tested and over-promoted to doctors, DES was distributed to millions of pregnant women in the form of shots, pills and hidden in their vitamins. More than 30 years after it was proven to be harmful to women and their fetuses, the FDA failed to instruct doctors not to prescribe it.

In addition to miscarriages, it induced breast cancer in the mothers. Cancer, infertility, and epididymal cysts were just some of the effects on the children who were exposed in utero.

Today, DES grandchildren are in their late teens, twenties and beyond. Are you a DES grandchild? Ask your mother and your grandmother. They may not realize that DES could be affecting you, too.

You now have access to the archives of DES Action, one of the most successful grassroots organizations in the US. They are housed at the Sophia Smith International Women’s History Collection, at Smith College.

### Want to know more?

#### DES Action Symposium

**Date:** Thursday, March 2, 2017

**Time:** 4:45 - 7:00 p.m., light refreshments served

**Location:** Mount Holyoke College Campus - Room Cleveland L2

**Parking:** On Park Street or across the street in Torrey Hall parking lot

**Hotel:** Rooms available at the Willits-Hallowell Center on campus. When reserving, tell them you are with the DES Action Symposium for the group discount rate: 413-538-2217

*Presented in collaboration with the Five Colleges Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice Program, and the Five Colleges Women's Studies Research Center*

<http://www.desaction.org/>

## *Some of the amazing people you will meet at the DES Workshop:*

**Jen Bolmarcich** is processing the DES Action USA Records as an intern in the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College. She worked in biotech for eight years before entering library school, where she studies archives. As a DES granddaughter, the collection is of personal importance to her. She hopes to work with other scientific and medical archival collections after she earns her M.S. in May 2017.

**Karen Calechman** (MHC '78) and a DES daughter, initiated and has led the effort to hold this DES symposium, determined that the students of the Five Colleges learn about DES exposure, and the exceptional opportunities that working with the DES Action Archives offers. Karen's recent experience is as the manager of Project ECHO, L.A. (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes, L.A.), a non-profit education program for community healthcare doctors in L. A. County.

**Kari Christiansen** is a member of the NIH National Cancer Institute DES Follow-up Study Steering Committee and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Partners Committee. A DES daughter herself, Kari has been active with DES Action USA since 1980. She has served as Board President from 1984-1989 and 1998-2001.

**Elizabeth Myers** is the Director of Special Collections at Smith College, where she oversees the efforts of the Sophia Smith Collection in the Mortimer Rare Book and the College Archive. Her goal is to preserve and expand their collections, and make them available to researchers. Additionally, Beth contributes to the educational mission of the college through the Special Collections' learning programs, including the Archives and Book Studies concentrations.

**Julie Palmer, Sc.D.**- *Associate Director, Slone Epidemiology Center; Professor of Epidemiology, Boston University School of Public Health; Principal Investigator (PI) at Boston University.*

Dr. Palmer has led a collaborative follow-up study of DES-exposed cohorts and published findings of a positive association of prenatal DES exposure with risk of breast cancer. She is one of three multiple PIs who have organized a collaborative NCI Program Project (AMBER), which combines data, germline DNA, and tumor tissue samples from four epidemiologic studies of breast cancer in African American women for identification of factors related to specific breast cancer subtypes.

**Suzanne Robotti** is the executive director of DES Action. Our mission is to identify, educate, empower and advocate for DES-exposed individuals. Suzanne is also president of MedShadow.org, which she launched three years ago as a means of educating the public that all medicines have side effects, most of which are unknown. MEDShadow.org encourages people to weigh the expected benefits of medicine against the known and unknown side effect risk. Suzanne is a DES daughter.

**Marlene Gerber Fried** is the Co-Chair Five Colleges Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice Program, professor of Philosophy, Faculty Director of Civil Liberties and Public Policy, Hampshire College.

**And meet more people who lived through the DES tragedy**