



Body Failure: Medical Views of Women, 1900-1950

Wendy Mitchinson

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In this energetic new study, Wendy Mitchinson traces medical perspectives on the treatment of women in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century. It is based on in-depth research in a variety of archival sources, including Canadian medical journals, textbooks used in many of Canada's medical faculties, popular health literature, patient case records, and hospital annual reports, as well as interviews with women who lived during the period.

Each chapter examines events throughout a woman's life cycle – puberty, menstruation, sexuality, marriage and motherhood – and the health problems connected to them – infertility, birth control and abortion, gynaecology, cancer, nervous disorders, and menopause. Mitchinson provides a sensitive understanding of the physician/patient relationship, the unease of many doctors about the bodies of their female patients, as well as overriding concerns about the relationship between female and male bodies. Throughout the book, Mitchinson takes care to examine the roles and agency of both patients and practitioners as diverse individuals.

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