



Female Circumcision and Clitoridectomy in the United States: A History of a Medical Treatment (Rochester Studies in Medical History)

Sarah B. Rodriguez

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From the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, American physicians treated women and girls for masturbation by removing the clitoris (clitoridectomy) or clitoral hood (female circumcision). During this same time, and continuing to today, physicians also performed female circumcision to enable women to reach orgasm. Though used as treatment, paradoxically, for both a perceived excessive sexuality and a perceived lack of sexual responsiveness, these surgeries reflect a consistent medical conception of the clitoris as a sexual organ. In recent years the popular media and academics have commented on the rising popularity in the United States of female genital cosmetic surgeries, including female circumcision, yet these discussions often assume such procedures are new. In *Female Circumcision and Clitoridectomy in the United States: A History of a Medical Treatment*, Sarah Rodriguez presents an engaging and surprising history of surgeries on the clitoris, revealing how medical views of the female body and female sexuality have changed -- and in some cases not changed -- throughout the last century and a half. Sarah B. Rodriguez is lecturer in medical humanities and bioethics and in global health studies at Northwestern University.

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