Of Vitamins and Veils: Women Physicians, Transnational Medical Research, and the Framing of Osteomalacia in Late Colonial India

with Dr. Maneesha Lal

This presentation will analyze how discourses about the veiling and seclusion of Indian women and debates about vitamin deficiency diseases interacted to shape the identity of osteomalacia as a female malady in late colonial India. Beginning with a discussion of the medical research on osteomalacia conducted by British women physicians in the 1920s, the talk will go on to trace the disease's heightened visibility and evolution through the 1930s and 1940s, paying particular attention to shifting problems of diagnosis, etiology, and treatment. Dr. Lal will argue that osteomalacia provides a unique lens through which to examine the paradoxical role occupied by British women in the racially stratified and gender segregated Indian medical profession, a role that yet gave them access to national and transnational networks of medical research. In addition, at a time when seclusion was increasingly contested in imperial, nationalist, and feminist discourse and practice, osteomalacia illustrates the rising influence of Western medical evidence as Indian feminists seized such evidence to bolster their own demands for purdah's reform.

Friday, March 19, 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.
Campus Center room 307

Dr. Lal is a visiting professor at Trinity College. She received her Ph.D. in History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania. She has published several articles and book chapters on medicine in colonial India and is currently working on her book manuscript, *Purdah and Pathology: Women Physicians in Colonial India*.

This presentation is co-sponsored by the UH-Manoa Departments of Ethnic Studies, History and Women's Studies. For more information, please call 956-5652 or e-mail csas@hawaii.edu