



Negotiating Pharmaceutical Uncertainty: Women's Agency in a South African HIV Prevention Trial

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Telling the story of a clinical trial testing an innovative gel designed to prevent women from contracting HIV, *Negotiating Pharmaceutical Uncertainty* provides new insight into the complex and contradictory relationship between medical researchers and their subjects. Although clinical trials attempt to control and monitor participants' bodies, Saethre and Stadler argue that the inherent uncertainty of medical testing can create unanticipated opportunities for women to exercise control over their health, sexuality, and social relationships. Combining a critical analysis of the social production of biomedical knowledge and technologies with a detailed ethnography of the lives of female South African trial participants, this book brings to light issues of economic exclusion, racial disparity, and spiritual insecurity in Johannesburg's townships. Built on a series of tales ranging from strategy sessions at the National Institutes of Health to witchcraft accusations against the trial, *Negotiating Pharmaceutical Uncertainty* illuminates the everyday social lives of clinical trials. As embedded anthropologists, Saethre and Stadler provide a unique and nuanced perspective of the reality of a clinical trial that is often hidden from view.

Biography of Author(s)

Eirik Saethre is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and author of *Illness Is a Weapon: Indigenous Identity and Enduring Afflictions* (also published by Vanderbilt University Press).

Jonathan Stadler is an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Reviews

"Most scholarship focuses more on power relations within clinical trials, but these authors have gone beyond that to show how women—at least in this particular trial, with this particular pharmaceutical—create their own definition of success and generate their own meanings and engagements."

--Susan Craddock, coeditor of *Influenza and Public Health: Learning from Past Pandemics*