

# Love Doctors

By Amy H. Carter

*W*hat kind of ammunition did Jennifer and Laura Berman use to trigger the new sexual revolution?

Words.

Not what you were thinking?

They weren't exactly what the medical establishment was thinking either when they took the world by storm via the Discovery Health Channel, Time, Newsweek, Elle and Vogue.

Dubbed the Love Doctors and the Baby Ruths (after renowned sex therapist Dr. Ruth Westheimer), sisters Jennifer Berman, M.D., 43, and Laura Berman, Ph.D., 40, found fame and – one would think – fortune talking about what no one else would: female sexual dysfunction.

By telling women that, no, it wasn't just in their heads, the Berman sisters gave women the words and the actions that helped them find satisfaction.

"This issue with female physiology was to have the medical field acknowledge what they wouldn't before, that sexual problems are not all in women's heads and that there are physiological reasons why women experience problems in that regard," says Jennifer.

The sisters co-hosted the television series "Berman and Berman: For Women Only" on the Discovery Health Channel from 2002 until 2004, and co-founded the Female Sexual Medicine Center at UCLA in 2001. Today, Jennifer is in private practice in Los Angeles. Laura is director of the Berman Center

in Chicago and an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry and obstetrics/gynecology at Northwestern University. She starred in a 2006 reality show on Showtime titled "Sexual Healing," and her fourth book – "Real Sex for Real Women" (DK Adult) was released in October.

The daughters of Dr. Irwin Berman, a retired colorectal surgeon who practiced in Brunswick and lived for many years on St. Simons Island

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before moving to Florida in September, the Berman sisters jokingly refer to themselves as a "below the belt" family. Jennifer is a urologist specializing in women's issues, and Laura is a sex therapist. Both sisters graduated from local high schools – Jennifer from Frederica Academy and Laura from Glynn Academy.

They went separate ways after high school. Jennifer received her medical degree from the Boston University School of Medicine. Laura obtained her master's degree in clinical social work and a doctorate in health education

and therapy at New York University. By virtue of being four years apart in age, the sisters didn't spend much time together while growing up. That all changed when they found themselves gravitating toward the same career.

"I'd like to have a great story, but honestly it just sort of happened," says Laura. "Maybe in some small way I inspired her because I was practicing sex therapy as she was finishing her urology training right around the time that Viagra first hit the market. Sex was on the mind of her urology patients who all wanted to try it and we spoke a great deal about how Viagra might work for women and how important a mind-body approach to sex was. We were both comfortable with the subject in fields where our colleagues were pretending it didn't exist."

Together they partnered in the start-up of a Women's Sexual Health Clinic at Boston University School of Medicine. They started the first such center on the West Coast at UCLA a few years later, about the same time their first book on women's sexuality, "For Women Only" (Henry Holt and Co., 2001) was published.

Jennifer began blazing her own trail early by choosing the subspecialty of female urology in medical school. It's only been in the last 30 years or so that the medical field recognized a need for specialists in female urology, and even sooner since women have felt welcome to specialize in the field.