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**WHAM! Issues Phase Two of \$150,000 Multiyear Investment in Novel Women's Heart Disease Research**

*Dr. Michelle O'Donoghue will receive a second \$50,000 WHAM! Investigators Fund grant to study and identify women's risk of heart disease.*

**Greenwich, CT (August 17, 2020)** – The WHAM! (Women's Health Access Matters!) Investigators Fund is awarding Dr. Michelle O'Donoghue from the Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology at Brigham and Women's Hospital, a teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School, a second grant to help improve the risk analysis algorithm to better reflect actual risks for women and heart disease. The WHAM!-funded research applies emerging technologies that leverage information derived from a combination of biomarkers to assess and identify women at risk of heart disease and further delineate the underlying causal pathways that contribute to its development.

"Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women in the United States," said Carolee Lee, founder and CEO of WHAM! "Men and women experience signs and symptoms of heart attacks very differently, but traditional research has focused almost exclusively on men. The result is that women with heart disease are frequently misdiagnosed and undertreated. If we can better understand women's risk factors for heart disease, we can improve women's health outcomes, which will have powerful effects for our economy. Studies show that left unaddressed, [heart-related healthcare costs will surpass \\$1 trillion by 2035.](#)"

"Up to 20% of coronary events in women occur in the absence of known risk factors and many women with established risk factors do not experience any coronary events," explained Dr. O'Donoghue. "Existing risk algorithms may not correctly estimate patient risk in women which calls for the use of new discovery tools to help develop a more personalized approach toward patient risk assessment."

"This research will forge new ground in women's heart health," said Dr. Hadine Joffe, Executive Director of the [Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology](#), Brigham and Women's Hospital and a founding member and lead scientific advisor to the WHAM! Collaborative. "With a deeper understanding of the pathways that lead to heart disease specifically in women and an updated risk analysis algorithm, we will be able to advance prevention and treatment of heart disease among women."

WHAM!'s initial grant to Dr. O'Donoghue in 2018 was the inaugural grant issued by the WHAM! Investigators Fund. Dr. O'Donoghue analyzed 130 patients who experienced heart attacks and 130

patients who did not. The study is entering into preliminary analysis. This second grant from WHAM! continues the progress made during the first year of Dr. O'Donoghue's research and will include a larger number of individuals.

WHAM! has funded two additional studies. Dr. Hilary Blumberg from the Blumberg Lab at Yale University received a grant from WHAM! to examine whether sleep improvements in women lead to lower Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) risk biomarkers. Dr. Nicole Weitowich from Northwestern University recently received WHAM! funding to quantify the number of COVID-19 research studies that include both men and women and analyze findings through sex and gender.

### **About WHAM!**

WHAM! is a donor-funded, non-profit organization, dedicated to improving and elevating the health of women to 21st century standards by showcasing the economic imperative of women's health research in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and outcomes. WHAM! aims to expand the scientific and clinical knowledge about health conditions that occur exclusively, predominantly and differentially in women and to translate these findings into solutions that optimize women's health. In collaboration with the RAND Corporation, WHAM! is releasing a detailed study to examine the economic consequences of the disparity in women's health research. WHAM! has four disease focus areas: autoimmune disease, brain health, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. Additional information can be found at <https://whamnow.org/>.

### **About Dr. Michelle O'Donoghue**

Dr. Michelle O'Donoghue is a cardiovascular medicine specialist at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH). She is also an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School (HMS). The author numerous peer-reviewed publications, Dr. O'Donoghue's research focuses on optimizing the management of acute coronary syndromes (heart attacks), the study of women and heart disease, the use of existing biomarkers for risk stratification, potential new therapeutic targets, as well as the discovery and evaluation of novel biomarkers using "omic"-based technology. Additional information can be found [here](#).

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