

Women's Health, at the Top of the List



Lisa Warner in her lab at Boise State University. Alex Hecht for The New York Times

To the Editor:

Re “Women in Academia Face a New Burden” (Science Times, Oct. 6):

The severity of the Covid-19 pandemic has worsened what was already a troubling phenomenon: When a health challenge strikes, women are often hit the hardest emotionally and economically. The reality is that, pandemic or not, women disproportionately leave successful careers to care for loved ones when facing diseases.

Changing workplace policies and practices to accommodate the unique circumstances and needs of women amid Covid-19 is one, albeit short-term, solution. But the only way to prevent this in the future is committing to better, more thorough health research now.

Across a number of diseases, men and women experience different symptoms, outcomes and responses to treatments. Current clinical research rarely accounts for this, leaving gaps in our understanding of many diseases. For instance, Covid is more fatal for men, yet few clinical trials consider sex and gender differences.

Without adequate knowledge, women will continue to bear the economic and professional burdens of the health challenges that plague us. Not only will women suffer, but we will also forfeit the invaluable contributions of women in the work force.

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The writer is the founder and chief executive of WHAM! (Women's Health Access Matters).