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INVESTING IN WOMEN’S ALZHEIMER’S RESEARCH

YIELDS GREATER ECONOMIC RETURNS, STUDY FINDS

*The WHAM Report shows $300 million invested in women-focused research  
 adds $930 million to the economy*

Greenwich, CT (April 22, 2021) – WHAM (Women’s Health Access Matters, [whamnow.org](https://www.whamnow.org/)) today released [The WHAM Report](http://www.thewhamreport.org/), new research conducted by the RAND Corporation showing that doubling the current federal investment in women-focused Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia (ADRD) research adds over $930 million to the economy, producing greater economic benefits and health outcomes than investing in general Alzheimer’s research.

Women make up over 50 percent of the population above age 35 and 66 percent of the 7 million people living with Alzheimer’s disease. Yet in 2019, just 12 percent of the Alzheimer’s research budget from the National Institutes of Health, the largest federal source of Alzheimer’s research funding, went to projects specifically focused on women.

“For every adult over 35 in the U.S., about $13.50 in federal tax dollars is invested in Alzheimer’s research -- but when you dig into the numbers, women get just $3.00 each,” said Carolee Lee, Founder and CEO of WHAM. “We asked: What if we increased investment in women’s health? The results are clear: funding women’s health research is not just good science, it’s a good investment.”

This funding disparity has economic consequences, especially when women are held back from work because of inadequate treatment options or because they more frequently take on take on family care. WHAM commissioned the nonprofit RAND Corporation to study the impact of accelerating sex and gender–based health research on women, their families, and the economy across three diseases that impact women differently and differentially: Alzheimer’s disease (brain); rheumatoid arthritis (autoimmune), and cardiovascular disease (heart).

Key findings from the first WHAM Report: Societal Impact of Research Funding for Women’s Health in Alzheimer’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease–related dementias include:

* Doubling current funding for women’s ADRD research pays for itself three times over. Adding $300 million for women’s ADRD research in a single year returns $930 million to the economy over thirty years.
* Doubling investment in women’s health research can yield a 224% return on investment is greater than the returns from general ADRD research that is not specified for women.
* When doubling current funding, for every $1.00 invested, we see a $2.00 increase in economic activity from health and quality of life improvements and save $1.24 in nursing home care costs.

“This project really gives some guidance about how, as a society, we could prioritize research funding in a way to yield a very positive return on investment,” said Lori Frank, senior author of the study and a Senior Behavioral Scientist at the RAND Corporation. “Using conservative assumptions about health improvements, our modeling suggests that the U.S. could see significant gains in health outcomes, quality of life and economic savings by increasing investment in women-focused Alzheimer’s disease research.”

The gender gap in medical research including research with animals is well documented for Alzheimer’s disease and across other critical areas of medical research. While two-thirds of Alzheimer’s patients are women, 66 percent of the animals used in Alzheimer’s research are male or of unspecified gender.

“BrightFocus Foundation is a leading private funder of research to defeat Alzheimer’s, and to do that, we must answer why and how women are disproportionately affected by Alzheimer’s disease,” said Stacy Pagos Haller, BrightFocus President and CEO. “BrightFocus is investing $25 million this year to advance bold, innovative science to end Alzheimer’s and other diseases. We are proud to partner with WHAM to support this report and be among the first to act on these data by increasing investments in research that will better the quality of life for women and men now and for future generations.”

“For advocates, the WHAM Report brings fresh data and a new economic lens that makes and broadens our case.” said Meryl Comer, Vice Chair of WHAM and Co-Founder of UsAgainstAlzheimer’s. “Precision medicine starts with sex. Some of the most exciting breakthroughs in Alzheimer’s are showing us what we should already know – that sex and gender-based research is critical to finding treatments and a cure for Alzheimer’s. Thanks to the WHAM report, we know that these investments will generate outsized economic impacts in addition to health breakthroughs.”

“In the latest Alzheimer’s research, focusing on sex- and gender-based differences is revealing substantive, innovative breakthroughs in how we understand Alzheimer’s disease pathology and its separate effects on the female and male brains,” said Dr. Roberta Diaz Brinton, Director of the UA Center for Innovation in Brain Science at the University of Arizona. “For researchers, the WHAM report helps make the case to funders that sex and gender specific studies in Alzheimer’s is absolutely necessary moving forward.”

WHAM works to accelerate research that examines why and how health issues from heart disease to Alzheimer’s to cancer to immune conditions differently and differentially impact men and women, to inform better health outcomes for everyone and to help improve our economy. WHAM will publish additional reports in coming months, continuing its mission to fund women’s health research and transform women’s lives.

The WHAM Report brief and technical report are available on [www.thewhamreport.org](http://www.thewhamreport.org).

**About WHAM:** WHAM is a nonprofit 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. The WHAM Investigator’s Fund supports innovative women’s health research through private donations. The WHAM Collaborative brings together researchers and clinicians from leading institutions focused on women’s health research to advance each other’s work and set priorities. The WHAM Report, produced in collaboration with the nonprofit RAND Corporation, examines the economic and societal impacts of increasing health research focused on women. WHAM has four disease focus areas: autoimmune disease, brain health, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. Additional information can be found at [www.whamnow.org](http://www.whamnow.org) and [www.thewhamreport.org](http://www.thewhamreport.org).

**About BrightFocus:** BrightFocus Foundation is a premier source of private research funding to defeat Alzheimer’s, macular degeneration, and glaucoma. The organization has supported over 275 projects, a $60 million investment, over the past three years alone to find the cures for diseases of mind and sight. It shares the latest research findings and best practices to empower families impacted by these diseases. Learn more at [www.brightfocus.org](http://www.brightfocus.org)

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