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Contact: Caroline Ahearn, 774-571-3288, carolineahearn@rational360.com

THE WHAM REPORT FINDS DISPARITIES IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH FOCUSED ON WOMEN AND SHOWS ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF INVESTING MORE

*New study shows that investing $300 million in health research focused on women generates $13 billion to economy will be featured on Capitol Hill today*

Washington, DC (October 28, 2021) – WHAM (Women’s Health Access Matters, [whamnow.org](https://whamnow.org/)), a nonprofit organization working to increase awareness of and accelerate funding for women's health research, today released “The Case to Fund Women’s Health Research: An Economic and Societal Impact Analysis,” a [new report](http://www.thewhamreport.org/) showing that investing just $300 million in health research focused on women across just three disease areas will generate over $13 billion in economic returns through improved quality of life, reduced healthcare costs and more productive years added back to our workforce. The report shows that $26 million of that investment would add back over 43,000 years of full-time employment to our workforce.

“Women’s health is an economic issue that impacts everyone, and we can’t afford to ignore it,” said WHAM Chief Executive Officer and Founder Carolee Lee. “Women are more than half of the population, nearly 50% of the workforce, control 60% of personal wealth, and are responsible for 85% of consumer spending and 80% of healthcare decisions. Yet even while diseases impact them disproportionately and differently, pulling many from the workforce too soon, investment in women’s health research lags. The WHAM Report not only quantifies the benefits of increasing sex and gender research, but also serves as an accountability index for change.”

The WHAM Report, “The Case to Fund Women’s Health Research: An Economic and Societal Impact Analysis,” shows that research focused on women is needed across disease areas, and that breaking down disease silos is more critical than ever as we move earlier and earlier into disease prevention. The brain and the heart are not separate and autoimmune is pervasive across diseases. By looking across these disease areas, The WHAM Report makes it clear that can no longer ignore sex and gender health research connections across diseases. This is not just about women. Everyone benefits. Sex and gender research is the gateway to the future of precision medicine.

“If we as a nation want to make sure women have access to the best health care possible, we need to start by ensuring a diversity of women are included when biomedical research trials are conducted,” said Senator Tammy Duckworth. “A great way to do that is by investing more in women in science.”

The WHAM Report is the result of a data-driven study commissioned by WHAM and conducted by the RAND Corporation that looks at three specific diseases that impact women differently to understand current levels of funding for research focused on woman and to model the economic, quality of life, health savings and workforce impacts of increasing research focused specifically on women.

“Women are a significant force in our economy. Thanks to the WHAM Report we know that investments in women’s health research are investments that grow and strengthen our entire economy,” said Representative Don Beyer, Chairman of the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee. “Expanding health research focused on women is an important way we can help create a stronger, more stable, and more equitable economy.”

60% of rheumatoid arthritis patients are women, but just 7% of research funds focus specifically on women. More than 500,000 women die from heart disease in the United States each year -- almost twice as many women as breast, lung, ovarian and uterine cancers combined, but just 4.5% of research funds focus specifically on women. 66% of Alzheimer’s patients are women, yet just 12% of research funds focus on them.

Key Findings from the Report include:

* Coronary Artery Disease Health Research
* 4.5%, or $20 million, of the $444 million 2019 NIH coronary artery disease budget focused specifically on women, even though heart disease remains the number one killer of women.
* Doubling coronary artery disease research focused on women pays for itself 100 times over. Adding a $20 million investment, generates nearly $2 billion in economic returns, a 9500% return on investment.
* This $20 million investment in research focused on women would add 12,000 productive years back to our workforce.
* Autoimmune/Rheumatoid Arthritis Health Research
* 7% of the nearly $86 million 2019 NIH research budget for rheumatoid arthritis was focused specifically on women, even though women make up 60% of patients with this disease.
* Doubling women’s rheumatoid arthritis research pays for itself 1,750 times over. Adding $6 million, produces $10.5 billion in economic benefits, an over 174,000% return on investment.
* This $6 million investment brings back nearly 34,000 productive years back to our workforce.
* Alzheimer’s Health Research
* 12%, or $280 million of the $2.4 billion 2019 NIH Alzheimer’s disease research budget focused specifically on women, though 66% of Alzheimer’s patients are women.
* Doubling Alzheimer’s research focused on women, adding $280 million in research funding, $930 million in economic returns, through improved quality of life and reduced healthcare costs, a 224% return on investment -- a 15% higher return than general research.
* For every $1.00 invested, we get back $2.00 in quality-of-life improvements and $1.24 in healthcare cost savings.

For women and especially women of color, are underrepresented in the research we do and the remedies we have. Things are beginning to change but not enough.” Said Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky. “We need to underscore the need for research for women’s health. The data the WHAM Report provides is so useful, if we focus on just three disease areas, we will add $13 billion to the economy because of that investment. The payoff if not only for our sisters, but for the economy, the federal budget, and our country.”

“When we talk about economic gains we are speaking the same language about empowerment, fairness, and in this case, health equity,” said Marsha Henderson, former Associate Commissioner for Women's Health at the Food and Drug Administration. “If spending a little to do more analysis of research data by sex, gender, and subpopulation brings these types of returns, we must spend the money. It’s just that simple.”

The WHAM Report is the first analysis of its kind to create and calibrate a microsimulation model of investment in health research and development that examines the differences for women’s health research. The report finds that investing in women’s health yields benefits beyond investing in general research. The economic returns quantified include increased life years, reduced years with disease, fewer years of functional dependence, and reductions in disruptions to work productivity.

“Biomedical research focused on why certain conditions particularly affect women has lagged for decades," said Susan Dentzer, Senior Policy Fellow for the Robert J. Margolis Center for Health Policy at Duke University and Chair of Research!America. “Many scientists have long known that sex and gender play important roles in disease incidence and prevalence, and that the experience of women who have these conditions can be very different from that of men. Yet huge gaps remain in our understanding of why this is so. The WHAM Report shows that, if we can close these gaps by investing relatively small amounts of research dollars, we can not only advance health, but also reap huge economic returns. That's a clear-cut message that we must now carry to funders and policy makers -- and fast."

“Gender disparities in health research as well as in grant funding to women researchers need to be addressed,” said Congresswoman Haley Stevens, Chair of the House Research and Technology Subcommittee. “Not just because these disparities are unfair, but because they are holding our health and, now we know, our economy back.”

The WHAM report is spurring change in how institutions and organizations approach sex and gender in health research. Susan Dentzer, Senior Policy Fellow for the Robert J. Margolis Center for Health Policy at Duke University and Chair of Research!America, will discuss the report data and findings with a panel of leaders and scientists, including Marsha Henderson, former Associate Commissioner for Women's Health at the Food and Drug Administration, Dr. Jennifer Hall, Chief of Data Science and Co-Director, Institute for Precision Cardiovascular Medicine, American Heart Association, Dr. Erica Ollmann Saphire, PhD, President & CEO, La Jolla Institute for Immunology, Dr. Sharyn Rossi, PhD, Director of Neuroscience Programs, BrightFocus Foundation, and Jennifer Luray, Vice President of Strategy and Communications, Research!America.

“When we can measure something, we can manage it better, and these measurements show how more research funding for heart disease in women will help us manage this threat so much better to the benefit of everyone,” said American Heart Association Chief of Data Science Dr. Jennifer Hall, who co-directs the Association’s Institute for Precision Cardiovascular Medicine.

“Women are not small men,” said Erica Ollmann Saphire, President and CEO of La Jolla Institute for Immunology. “The current Covid-19 pandemic shows us that more clearly than ever. 80% of the patients with autoimmune diseases are women. The WHAM Report shows us that increasing funding for research that focuses on women specifically will not only bring better health outcomes, but will bring greater economic returns. This report should impact our thinking not only as individual researchers but as institutions.”

“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 Sharyn Rossi, Director of Neuroscience Research at BrightFocus Foundation. “BrightFocus is investing $25 million this year to advance bold, innovative science to end Alzheimer’s and other diseases of mind and sight. 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 a new, game-changing perspective,” said Jennifer Luray, Vice President of Strategy and Communications for Research!America. “By bringing in the economics, the workforce gains, the healthcare savings, we can make a powerful case for investing in research focused on women.”

In addition to this report, WHAM has released detailed individual reports on [Alzheimer’s disease](https://thewhamreport.org/report/brain/) and [coronary artery disease](https://thewhamreport.org/report/heart/), and is launching a report on rheumatoid arthritis in the coming weeks. In the future, WHAM plans to include lung cancer, and also study different socioeconomic groups to the extent that data are available and detail the global data which expands this research, all toward the goal of increasing funding for women’s health research to transform women’s lives.

**About WHAM (Women’s Health Access Matters)**

Women’s health is an economic issue we can’t afford to ignore. WHAM works to increase awareness of and funding for women’s health research by accelerating scientific discovery in women’s health in four primary disease verticals – autoimmune disease, brain health, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. The WHAM Report quantifies the economic opportunity for investing in women’s health, looking across diseases that impact women differently and differentially, including coronary artery disease, rheumatoid arthritis and Alzheimer’s disease. Learn more at [www.thewhamreport.org](http://www.thewhamreport.org) and [www.whamnow.org](http://www.whamnow.org).

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