Small Steps Lead to Big Results
BRINGING LABORATORY RESEARCH TO THE PEOPLE

Researchers in Dr. Martin Kriegel’s laboratory grasp petri dishes through rubber sleeves and gloves extending into heated and sealed work spaces, a prime environment for growing some of the tiniest, earliest forms of life on earth. From a single cell, these samples can grow into colonies containing millions of bacteria.

And that’s biomedical science: Thinking about a big impact from the smallest of things over long timespans. Reaching beyond a simple understanding of the properties and behaviors of life and its often microscopic components. Seeking ways to translate that knowledge into interventions potentially benefitting millions of people.

With a seed grant from WHRY, Yale researchers established evidence that an otherwise beneficial gut bacterium can confuse immune cells into attacking the body, triggering autoimmune disease.

“The next step is to bring this work to humans,” Kriegel said. “It’s a natural progression from what I’ve done so far.”

Kriegel’s most promising current avenue of inquiry began in 2013 with a seed grant from Women’s Health Research at Yale and an educated hunch.

Continued page 3

OUR 20TH YEAR

Betting on a Brighter Future
WHRY EXAMINES ADDICTION AND GENDER TO IMPROVE LIVES

In December, the Centers for Disease Control reported that in 2016, for the second straight year, life expectancy dropped for newborns in the United States.

That’s the first time the country has seen a two-year decline since the influenza epidemic of 1962-63. Before 2016, the most recent one-year drop was in 1993, during the peak of the AIDS crisis.

The source of this new spike in deaths? Drug overdoses, which have jumped 21 percent. Opioid overdoses alone contributed to 42,000 American deaths in 2016.

Even as drug addiction has grown into a nationwide epidemic, the problem does not affect men and women equally. Men are twice as likely to die of a drug overdose than women. And yet, over the decade leading up to 2010, the rate of women dying from prescription pain relief overdoses increased by 400 percent, compared with a 265 percent increase for men.

Continued on page 8
Women's Health Research at Yale was founded in 1998 with initial funding from The Patrick and Catherine Weldon Donaghue Medical Research Foundation. Women's Health Research at Yale is a program within Yale School of Medicine. Yale University is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

RECOGNIZING OUR SUPPORTERS

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Join the Society of Friends

Consider a donation to Women's Health Research at Yale in celebration of a birthday, a special occasion, or to honor someone in your life.

Our Society of Friends ensures the future of Women's Health Research at Yale. Gifts are welcome at all levels.

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about the outsized role played by one of the tiny organisms that live in our bodies and make up what is called the microbiome. Kriegel demonstrated how one of the beneficial bacteria that live in our gut might trick the body into developing antiphospholipid syndrome (APS), an autoimmune reaction more common in women.

“This was a big idea project,” said Dr. Bill Ruff, then a graduate student working in Kriegel’s lab. “The idea that bacteria living within us can trigger an autoimmune attack was not something that was mainstream. At least not in 2012 and 2013.”

While maintaining his research relationship with Yale as an Assistant Professor Adjunct, Kriegel has worked since last summer for Roche, the Swiss international health care company. Along with Yale students and colleagues, he remains committed to delivering the fruits of his WHRY-funded laboratory work to benefit patients.

A BODY AT WAR WITH ITSELF

Autoimmune disease occurs when our body’s natural defenses against foreign invaders such as disease-causing viruses and bacteria are tricked into attacking the body’s own cells. In APS, such a response can create life-threatening blood clots that might travel to the lung and cause strokes and heart attacks.

Autoimmune diseases such as APS, lupus, and rheumatoid arthritis affect 23.5 million Americans. Of those affected, 75 percent are women.

Theories for why women suffer in such higher numbers from these often similar diseases include genetic factors tied to the female X chromosome, the effect of female sex hormones, and environmental influences. One or more of these factors may trigger heightened immune responses to foreign substances, known as antigens, compared to those in men. The reproductive capacity of women must both recognize what cells are self-produced and which come from outside the body, yet allow what is fundamentally outside tissue to grow and thrive into offspring.

“Evolutionarily, it is likely related to the fact that women during childbearing ages need to protect their fetuses from infectious agents but at the same time need to regulate their responses against the fetus since half of the antigens in the fetus come from the father,” Kriegel said. “So there is a delicate balance of heightened and regulated immune responses women have to deal with that can easily go awry, even if they are not pregnant.”

Kriegel’s WHRY-funded study confirmed the identity of a gut bacterium called R. intestinalis, which contains bits and pieces similar to a body’s natural protein and, through a process called cross-reactivity, can be mistakenly targeted by disease-fighting immune cells in people with APS.

A FRIENDLY BACTERIUM SENDING UNFRIENDLY MESSAGES

Kriegel’s WHRY-funded study confirmed the identity of a gut bacterium called R. intestinalis, which contains bits and pieces similar to a body’s natural protein and, through a process called cross-reactivity, can be mistakenly targeted by disease-fighting immune cells in people with APS.

DEFINITION

Microbiome: the collection of microscopic organisms, such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses, that live in or on a host organism and impact many aspects of human and environmental health. Microbiome can also refer to the combined genetic material of such organisms. In humans, components of the microbiome play roles in the absorption of nutrients and fighting disease.
Kriegel’s team was able to establish evidence both in a culture dish and with human samples that for APS patients, the protein imitators within *R. intestinalis* confuse microbe-targeting immune cells called lymphocytes into attacking the body’s own cells.

Since the group’s first findings, they have obtained larger federal grants, shared their data at scientific meetings, prepared peer-reviewed articles for publication, and seen others follow their lead.

“Researchers are now exploring how cross-reactivity might influence the development of lupus and other autoimmune diseases,” Ruff said. “Once you get the ball rolling, it moves pretty quickly.”

Ruff extolled the importance of the early funding from WHRY to kickstart the work. “It’s huge,” Ruff said. “To get the bigger awards, you need some existing data. There are only a handful of places you can get that kind of funding.”

And it’s not just the funding, Ruff said, but the freedom to follow multiple avenues of research.

“Researchers are always testing hypotheses,” he said. “You might have five questions worth answering, and a grant agency wants you to work on one. Pilot money allows you to do quick, relatively inexpensive tests and create a basic nucleus of information out of which a more complex crystal of knowledge can grow. Pilot awards like those offered by WHRY are a vital tool for exploring scientific curiosity.”

**FROM TRIGGER TO TREATMENT**

As Kriegel shares time between Roche and Yale, this exploration continues to progress. He remains in regular contact with his team via Skype and is working to transition their work to other colleagues. At Roche, he is focused on developing clinical trials that test the ability of his laboratory work to safely and successfully treat patients.

“Working in the private sector is different than at a university,” Kriegel said. “But for me, the goal is the same. It’s about improving patients’ lives.”

If the disease-causing bacteria can’t easily be eliminated or if its role in promoting health is too important, Ruff suggested researchers might find a way to induce tolerance for specific bacteria without the negative effects, in the same way parents now slowly introduce their babies to peanuts to avoid developing allergies.

“Foreign substances introduced to the gut could allow the body to see certain bacteria as non-harmful,” Ruff said. “This is kind of the tip of the iceberg. Every new experiment helps to decide what to investigate next.”

For now, the work continues. Small steps involving small organisms and compounds leading toward big results with huge benefits for people’s health.

“It’s hard to aim at a target you can’t see,” Ruff said. “But now, by just being able to see the target, we can take better aim at it.”

---

**ABOUT THE INVESTIGATOR —**

**Dr. Martin Kriegel** earned his M.D. and a Ph.D. from Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in Germany. He is an Assistant Professor Adjunct of Immunobiology at Yale School of Medicine and a Translational Physician Scientist at Roche, the Swiss international health care company.

Dr. Kriegel’s research focuses on the role of the body’s microbiome in autoimmune diseases. He was an Emmy-Noether Scholar of the German Research Foundation, an Arthritis National Research Foundation Scholar, and an awardee of the Lupus Research Institute and the Arthritis Foundation.

The Women’s Health Research at Yale Pilot Project Program is supported in part by The Rice Family Foundation, The Werth Family Foundation, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, the Maximilian E. and Marion O. Hoffman Foundation, the Seymour L. Lustman Memorial Fund, and The Seedlings Foundation.
ADVANCING WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH AT YALE

A Permanent Force for Good

One of the great pleasures of serving as Philanthropy Chair for the Women’s Health Research at Yale Advisory Council involves the many conversations I hold with people curious about the center’s work.

The people I meet are often surprised and more than a little dismayed to learn that the federal government only began requiring the inclusion of women in National Institutes of Health-funded clinical trials following a law passed in 1993. And I am proud to talk about the advances WHRY has led since its founding 20 years ago.

But I’m often asked why WHRY continues to need financial support all these years later. What, they ask, still needs to be done?

WHRY is a self-supporting center within Yale School of Medicine, relying on support from foundations and individuals to accomplish its mission, which includes funding competitive research grants to advance women’s health and to uncover sex and gender differences.

We are grateful to have such generous and loyal supporters who share our goals! As to what work still needs doing after 20 years, the answer captures the essence of what makes WHRY necessary and important.

Today, women remain underrepresented in studies of cardiovascular disease and cancer, the two greatest killers of women in the country.

And even when researchers include adequate numbers of women in their studies, they don’t always analyze their results to account for potential sex or gender differences. Without looking for such differences, we can’t know what we might be missing when it comes to potentially significant, even life-saving preventions or treatments.

Moreover, while the NIH — the world’s largest single funder of biomedical research — has mandated the inclusion of women since 1993, it was only in 2016 that it required the use of female animals, tissues, and cells in laboratory studies. Such studies provide the biological basis for work in humans.

WHRY launches and funds studies that respond to pressing health concerns and generate data propelling larger investigations on women’s health and sex/gender differences. The center builds interdisciplinary research partnerships required to answer complex health questions. It communicates new health information of practical benefit through community and medical partnerships. It trains the next generation of researchers to study the influence of sex and gender on health outcomes. And it asserts a national voice on women’s health that informs public policy.

For 20 years, WHRY has led national efforts to translate new scientific knowledge into medical and personal practice to benefit public health. It must continue to evolve and advance.

Because we are always going to need to study women. And we are always going to need to understand differences between women and men. For 20 years, Women’s Health Research at Yale has driven great science forward to help improve the lives of everyone. And with your help, it will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

Barbara M. Riley
Philanthropy Chair

We are always going to need to study women and understand sex and gender differences.
Twenty years ago, Dr. Carolyn M. Mazure was awarded a generous grant by The Patrick and Catherine Weldon Donaghue Medical Research Foundation with which she founded Women’s Health Research at Yale. This self-sustaining interdisciplinary research center within Yale School of Medicine rapidly became a national model for initiating and supporting research on the influence of sex and gender in human health.

In recognition of this anniversary, the center’s many supporters, scientists, students, and mentees offered their thoughts and feelings about the last two decades and the change WHRY has made in leading us toward a healthier and happier future.

“As an early awardee of one of WHRY’s pilot grants, I was able to develop and test public health messages that encourage women at elevated risk for breast cancer to use routine mammography screening. This work led to a longer-term program of research funded by the National Cancer Institute. Thank you for ensuring that Yale is at the forefront of understanding how gender and sex influence health and illness and for educating health professionals and members of the community. I wish you every success for the next 20 years and beyond!”

— PETER SALOVEY, PH.D.
President, Yale University
Chris Argyris Professor of Psychology

“The two-decade evolution of WHRY is a testament to steady, deliberate growth through careful planning and distribution of resources with an unwavering focus on improving women’s health. This has allowed us to add new, exciting programs — such as our Undergraduate Fellowship — while first ensuring we are ready to take them on and that they will grow and flourish. May you forever prosper, WHRY. You have most certainly been built to last.”

— CAROL FROST ROSS
Chair, Advisory Council for Women’s Health Research at Yale

“Researchers often work in isolation, and they don’t necessarily know their work’s significance and impact. WHRY provided me with the assurance that my research on the smoking behaviors of women — particularly black women — is valued and contributes to a larger effort to investigate gender disparities and improve women’s health. You have given me the impetus to stay focused, move forward, and not give up. I still work with my WHRY mentor today, confident that the steps we are taking contribute to a larger effort.”

— AZURE THOMPSON, DR.PH.
Assistant Professor, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, School of Public Health
Graduate of WHRY’s NIH-funded Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health Scholar Program
“The Werth Family Foundation remains a committed partner with WHRY because of your ability to show concrete benefits and a plan for next steps in everything that you do. We are confident you will continue to improve health research and the practice of medicine for the benefit of women and men everywhere.”

— SUZANNE WERTH
Board Member,
The Werth Family Foundation

“Thank you for instilling in me the value of thinking about the impact of sex and gender as an issue affecting both the practice of science and the health of women. I know these are lessons I will carry with me and seek to advocate throughout the rest of my career.”

— BENJAMIN FAIT
Doctoral student,
The Rockefeller University
Former WHRY Undergraduate Fellow

“We are extremely proud of our longstanding support of WHRY and your role as a highly productive research engine that sparks innovation to improve lives and the economic future of the community. For 20 years, you have been an important leader attracting talent and delivering national and even global recognition to Yale and the Greater New Haven Area. Your commitment to advancing biomedical research and health equity for women improves lives while reinforcing our community’s greatest strengths.”

— WILLIAM W. GINSBERG
President & CEO,
The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven

“WHRY’s Pilot Project Program offers researchers at Yale the opportunity to explore vital questions that would otherwise not receive funding. We used our WHRY grant to test a vaccine strategy against genital herpes, generating data that resulted in funding from the National Institutes of Health for more comprehensive work on the vaccine. We hope to soon have a treatment in clinical trials that we expect will benefit the millions of people who are suffering from this disease, a majority of whom are women. If you don’t invest in this type of early stage research, you won’t have any breakthroughs.”

— AKIKO IWASAKI, PH.D.
Waldemar Von Zedtwitz Professor of Immunobiology and Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology
Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute at Yale School of Medicine

“STAY TUNED!”

Women’s Health Research at Yale will continue to celebrate our 20th Anniversary all year. Look for an interactive timeline on our website soon. And more from our valued partners online and in print.

If you wish to share your thoughts, please send them to rick.harrison@yale.edu.
“Historically, addiction research has focused primarily on men,” said Dr. Carolyn M. Mazure, Director of Women’s Health Research at Yale. “However, increasing addictive behaviors in women require that we identify and understand gender-specific risk factors for addictive behaviors and how addictions affect women and men differently so that we can improve prevention, treatment, and public health policies.”

This mission is not new to WHRY. In 2000, the center established its Women and Addictive Behaviors Core to investigate addictive behaviors with a focus on their effects in women. Led by Dr. Marc Potenza, the core’s researchers engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary studies across the lifespan, drawing on the latest genetic techniques, brain imaging technology, and cognitive and clinical assessments to develop gender-specific medical interventions addressing preventable causes of illness and death.

“The goal from the beginning was to factor gender into our understanding of addictive behaviors and disorders,” said Potenza, a Professor of Psychiatry with appointments in the Child Study Center and Neuroscience.

“Men and women and boys and girls differ in many ways, but we can help them all by understanding how specific addictions affect them differently.”

The core has published findings on how gender differences exist in problem gambling and substance use disorders involving nicotine, prescription drugs, and alcohol.

“When initiating studies, we meet as a group,” Potenza said. “We discuss potential projects to examine and explore gender-related differences.”

The core investigates addictions rooted in substances — both legal and illegal — and behaviors, including overeating, sexual behaviors, and internet use.

The work has included examining data collected through the Gambling Impact and Behavior Study, a survey of adults and adolescents begun in 1998 by researchers at the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago.

“A majority of adults gamble, but most do not develop a gambling disorder,” Potenza said, noting that gambling disorder is the only non-substance addictive disorder classified in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. “Those that do are more likely to be men, but there is evidence the gap might be narrowing as gambling becomes more socially accepted for both females and males.”

Potenza, who was honored in 2016 with a Lifetime Achievement Award in Gambling Research from the National Council on Problem Gambling and who also directs the Center of Excellence in Gambling Research, said men prefer strategic forms of gambling, such as betting on sports or card games such as blackjack and poker. Women show preferences for non-strategic forms, such as gambling on slot machines.

“The question we need to answer is how do we best prevent people from developing problems,” Potenza said. “Are there any public policies that can take these differences into account?”
In addition, the core has revealed that trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were more strongly associated with binge drinking and hazardous drinking among women as compared with men, that girls and boys involved in extracurricular activities were less likely to smoke marijuana and that this protective effect was stronger in girls, and that women and men have different expectations related to alcohol consumption, with women reporting different social and sexual outcomes from drinking.

In October of 2017, Potenza was honored with a research award by the Society for the Advancement of Sexual Health (SASH) for his recent work on compulsive sexual behaviors and problematic pornography use.

“The viewing of pornography is predominantly male, but the behavior significantly impacts women, particularly as young men and boys are often learning about sex through online pornography,” Potenza said. “The content of pornography over time has become more violent. And there are data to suggest that children as young as 7 to 10 years old are viewing pornography more frequently than in prior years.”

Another recent project of the core involves a section of the online journal Current Addiction Reports, guest-edited by Dr. Mazure and Yasmin Zakiniaeiz, devoted to sex and gender differences in addiction. Potenza is the Editor-In-Chief of the journal, and Zakiniaeiz is a graduate student pursuing a Ph.D. in neuroscience while working with Dr. Potenza and in a lab run by Dr. Evan Morris and Dr. Kelly Cosgrove, recipients of a recent WHRY grant to explore how the impact of smoking cannabis affects the brains of men and women differently.

Mazure is also currently collaborating on a paper exploring the gender differences in opioid addiction, seeking to draw more attention to the still-unknown factors driving the current deadly epidemic.

“It’s exciting to see that the work is having a national and an international impact,” Potenza said about his active collaborations with colleagues in China, South Korea, Italy, Spain, and Israel, among other countries. He feels confident in the core’s body of work and hopeful for a future in which a better understanding of how sex and gender influence addiction leads to better outcomes for everyone.

“I am confident that the seeds we have been planting to understand how sex and gender impact illness and disease will bring about better prevention strategies and treatments,” he said.

ABOUT THE INVESTIGATOR —
Dr. Marc Potenza earned a combined B.S. and M.S. in Molecular Biochemistry and Biophysics and a Ph.D. in Cell Biology with a concurrent M.D. — all at Yale University. He is currently a Professor of Psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine in the Child Study Center and of Neuroscience and Director of WHRY’s Women and Addictive Behaviors Core, the Center of Excellence in Gambling Research, and the Yale Program for Research on Impulsivity and Impulse Control Disorders.

Dr. Potenza is a board-certified psychiatrist with sub-specialty training and certification in addiction psychiatry. He has consulted to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Registry of Effective Programs, National Institutes of Health, American Psychiatric Association, and World Health Organization on matters of addiction.

WHRY’S WOMEN AND ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS CORE HAS PUBLISHED FINDINGS ON HOW GENDER DIFFERENCES EXIST IN PROBLEM GAMBLING AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS INVOLVING NICOTINE, PRESCRIPTION DRUGS, AND ALCOHOL.
**Our 20th Year**

**Turning Bad Genes Good**

**Stopping Ovarian Cancer Growth on a Molecular Level**

Every year, about 22,440 American women learn they have ovarian cancer. And every year, about 14,000 women die from the disease.

Over the last two decades and aided by a grant from Women’s Health Research at Yale in 1999, Dr. Setsuko Chambers has directed a laboratory focused on understanding the molecular mechanisms underlying the development of ovarian and breast cancer.

“The level of sophistication of our recent work has advanced tremendously since 1999, both conceptually and in terms of the explosion in development of experimental methods,” Chambers said. “We have expanded on the basic work we were able to perform back then, as a result of WHRY’s pilot funding.”

When Chambers received her WHRY grant, she was an Associate Professor of Gynecologic Oncology, seeking a way to target genes within cancer cells that control aggressive tumor behavior to enhance patient survival and decrease toxicity from chemotherapy. Focusing on ribonucleic acid (RNA), a molecule that works with deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) to carry out genetic instructions, Chambers’ work revealed more about how molecular processes behaved within an ovarian cancer cell, advancing the development of therapies used to treat this disease.

“Gene therapy utilizing RNAs as we proposed in 1999 was novel then but ahead of its time,” she said. “It turned out that RNA decoys — RNA created to mimic and redirect the function of naturally occurring RNA in a cancer cell — could not be realistically delivered to patients, although the mechanisms proposed were sound. Thanks in part to our findings, the field of ovarian cancer treatment evolved to embrace targeted therapies such as small molecule inhibitors and antibodies.”

These therapies led to huge progress, after decades of stagnation, in immunotherapy, which involves triggering the body’s disease-eliminating immune system to recognize cancer cells as foreign substances and kill them instead of accepting them as extensions of the body’s healthy processes.

Dr. Chambers was recruited from Yale to the University of Arizona Cancer Center in 2004 and has since been elected to the National Academy of Sciences Health and Medicine Division while serving as the center’s Director of Women’s Cancers and Vice Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She has developed the center’s clinic for women at high risk for ovarian and breast cancer, focusing on how genetic testing might provide insight for risk assessment of subgroup populations for early detection as well as a way to gauge the response of tumors to specific therapies.

As one of the few gynecologic oncologist physician-scientists in the country, Chambers leads a team of interdisciplinary clinicians and researchers focused on delivering the best care to women grounded in the latest science. She expressed the need for programs like Women’s Health Research at Yale to continue supporting researchers so they might obtain the data necessary to advance our understanding of and ability to treat diseases and conditions that affect millions of people.

“When I began this work at Yale, pilot funding was critical as a basis to get preliminary data for larger grants,” she said. “And with today’s competition and shrinking pools of federal dollars, such pilot funding is even more important.”

---

**About the Investigator** —

Dr. Setsuko Chambers earned her M.D. and B.S. at Brown University. She is currently a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and of Medicine and of Cancer Biology at The University of Arizona Cancer Center, Vice Chair of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Director of Gynecologic Oncology, Director of Women’s Cancers, and the Bobbi Olson Endowed Chair in Ovarian Cancer Research.

Dr. Chambers is an elected member of the National Academy of Sciences Health and Medicine Division and developed The University of Arizona Cancer Center’s Division of Women’s Cancers to deploy genetic testing as a way to better detect and treat ovarian and breast cancer.
By the time you read this, there is a chance that the federal government will have drastically altered health care law and the funding of public health. There is also a chance that everything will remain the same, or at least on the same trajectory. And there is a decent chance that whatever has happened can be reversed or accelerated depending on the next election. Or the one after that.

I’ve decided to get out of the prediction business. But I can be sure of at least two things. One is that government decisions regarding the funding of health care research and access to health care will continue to carry potential threats to women’s health.

And the second is that Women’s Health Research at Yale will always work to limit those threats and help improve the health of women and men.

WHRY is a self-supporting, nonprofit center within Yale School of Medicine. We don’t take sides in partisan disputes or seek to leverage information for anyone’s political advantage. For the most part, we are scientists, investigating important questions affecting human health and sharing the latest information with the public and medical professionals. We want people to make more informed decisions and live happier, more productive lives.

But WHRY also seeks to inform public health policy through engaging with local, regional, and national policymakers. Our Director, Dr. Carolyn M. Mazure, Ph.D., has provided testimony to the U.S. Congress, served as a fellow for the Government Reform Committee, and was on the planning committee for the First White House Conference on Mental Health. She now serves on the Advisory Committee for the National Institutes of Health Office for Research on Women’s Health.

Over the summer, Dr. Mazure and three colleagues published a study in the high-impact journal JAMA Internal Medicine finding that not many medical devices are analyzed to consider the influence of their users’ sex, age, or race on safety and effectiveness. The study arrived in advance of Congress’ consideration to reauthorize a law requiring the clinical trial enrollment of women, minorities, and the elderly in the proportions used by a device’s target population. And it drew a response from the Food and Drug Administration about considering sex differences when approving medical devices.

In the fall, Dr. Mazure joined with more than a dozen medical and public health experts from across the country to call for increased public engagement to address federal government efforts that can threaten women’s health care. In the peer-reviewed journal Women’s Health Issues, the authors detailed the ongoing risks to women’s health posed by attempts to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act (ACA), commonly referred to as Obamacare. These attempts include efforts to restrict coverage of preventive services, reproductive health, and chronic disease care.

They detailed how the number of women paying out of pocket for contraceptive care decreased from 22 percent to 3 percent under the ACA’s provision mandating that patients not share costs, a benefit affecting 55 million women. A rollback in contraception coverage could cost women $1.4 billion per year in copayments, shrinking affordable access for women and leading to a spike in unintended pregnancies.

Efforts to eliminate the expansion of insurance coverage and services established by the ACA stalled in Congress, but a provision in the tax bill passed in December included the elimination of the individual insurance mandate, likely leading to fewer healthy adults seeking coverage, fewer people covered overall, increased premiums, and the potential instability of insurance markets.

And even though recent short-term spending increases have temporarily slowed a decade-long trend in which the NIH’s purchasing power sank by 25 percent, the future of this vital funding source remains unclear.

Biomedical research requires stability and certainty. It requires forward-thinking and fully inclusive policies relating to sex, gender, race, and all manner of demographics. It is difficult, perhaps even foolish to try to predict the future. But I’m sure that when it comes to changing the landscape of medical research and practice to improve human life, Women’s Health Research at Yale will be here working hard for you and those you love.
Women’s Health Research at Yale

Women's Health Research at Yale is changing the landscape of medical research and practice by ensuring the study of women and examining health differences between women and men to improve the lives of everyone.

Visit our website:
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Scan this code with your smartphone or email whresearch@yale.edu.

You’ve Got Male.
Now What About Women?

Sex and Gender Equity in Health Research

Please enjoy a video of a one-hour webinar in partnership with YaleWomen, featuring a conversation with WHRY Director Carolyn M. Mazure, Ph.D. and Elisa Spungen Bildner, member of the councils for WHRY and YaleWomen.

This thought-provoking “call to action” focused on the dramatic need to study women’s health, why women have not been studied, and what we are doing to remedy this serious issue.

To watch now, visit http://bit.ly/yww2017

INVESTIGATOR UPDATE
Small Steps Lead to Big Results, p. 1

OUR 20TH YEAR
Betting on a Brighter Future, p. 1

ADVANCING WOMEN’S HEALTH RESEARCH AT YALE, p. 5

HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY, WHRY, p. 6

OUR 20TH YEAR
Turning Bad Genes Good, p. 10

PRESS NOTES, p. 11