



NEWS RELEASE

March 8, 2022

New evidence from the Alberta Women's Health Foundation shows glaring disparity in funding

AWHF finds women's health research in AB receives just 3.4 per cent total funding from Canadian Institutes of Health Research

March 8, 2022—International Women's Day 2022 marks the one-year anniversary of the launch of the Alberta Women's Health Foundation (AWHF)—and the organization has discovered new evidence to show the extreme disparities that exist in women's health research funding in Alberta.

Women make up almost half of the population in Canada and the province of Alberta. However, the dollars invested in women's health research do not come close to this ratio. Women's health research receives no more than 8 per cent of medical research funding in Canada and only 3.4 per cent in Alberta. Women's health research dollars would need to increase *15-fold* to get us to parity.

“Traditionally, medical research has assumed that women's bodies do not differ substantially from men's, despite unique biology, physiology, and social factors influencing women's health,” said Sharlene Rutherford, President and CEO of the AWHF. “The impacts of this are compounded by the lack of investment in dedicated women's health research. As a result, we have considerable gaps in our understanding of women's health needs, risks, disease manifestation, and treatment responses.”

In alignment with the 2022 [International Women's Day campaign theme of #BreaktheBias](#), the AWHF is launching [a new video](#) and campaign to inspire women to share their own stories of experience with inequity and move us closer to our end goal: a diverse, equitable, and inclusive world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination, and where differences are valued and celebrated and equality in healthcare is assured.

In addition to the video launch, International Women's Day will also provide the platform for a free public online panel discussion, [Break the Bias: Dismantling Disparities in Women's Health Research and Care](#), hosted by the University of Alberta and the [Women and Children's Health Research Institute \(WCHRI\)](#). The 7 p.m. virtual event will feature four leading researchers and thought leaders with the [Women and Children's Health Research Institute \(WCHRI\)](#), who are shifting the paradigm in women's health care and research.

“These inequities extend from the ER where women are sent home during heart attacks because their unique symptoms go unrecognized, to the doctor’s office where 70 per cent of women avoid bringing up mental health concerns out of fear of judgment,” said Rutherford who will be one of four panel members at the event. “Our goal is for women to leave this session excited and ready to join the network of local changemakers who are unabashedly disrupting the status quo.”

Participants can learn how to advocate for themselves and their loved ones from experts who have seen first-hand how historic disparities in health care can lead to misdiagnoses and complications that negatively impact women’s health, and engage in a discussion on the triumphs and challenges of working in the women’s health research space.

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BACKGROUND

The Alberta Women’s Health Foundation

The Alberta Women's Health Foundation (AWHF) aims to foster equity in women’s health, close gaps that exist in research today, and connect pathways from lab to life; all of which advance clinical care at the Lois Hole Hospital for Women and other women's health centres across Alberta and beyond. An initiative of the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation, the AWHF supports over 160 researchers at the Women and Children's Health Research Institute (WCHRI), whose research projects focus specifically on women's health.

For more information, visit the AWHF at AlbertaWomensHealthFoundation.org