



Women's heart disease focus of new partnership

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By [Misti Crane](#)

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With the help of a big-name ally, the McConnell Heart Health Center hopes to help figure out how heart disease starts in women and what can be done to stop it.

Women's Health Research at Yale, which focuses on a variety of health issues and the psychosocial factors that play into them, is working with McConnell to study behavioral and biological factors and determine how gender contributes to heart health.

Carolyn Mazure at Yale and Dr. Teresa Caulin-Glaser in Columbus have worked together before and thought the efforts of both centers would meld nicely, they said.

Caulin-Glaser said she's hopeful that they will make discoveries that will change how women can prevent heart disease and how doctors treat them. Already, work at McConnell has found some disparities, including higher mortality in women who are depressed.

Currently, they're looking at cardiac rehabilitation and how patients fare when doctors managing their rehabilitation take responsibility for adjusting medications and make sure they don't slip through the cracks, Caulin-Glaser said. Women are much less likely than men to undergo cardiac rehabilitation after a heart attack.

"There really isn't all that much study compared to what's needed," Mazure said.

"If you really look at the depth of what's available, we're still at the very verge of understanding women's health and gender differences."

Because of Yale's reputation, the collaboration will help secure increasingly limited research dollars, Caulin-Glaser said.

"I think it's absolutely terrific," said Jill Steuer, who sits on the board of the Columbus branch of the American Heart Association and is the senior research nurse at Grant Medical Center, which like McConnell is owned by OhioHealth.

Research that focuses on women has increased significantly in recent years, and already is leading to useful information, most significantly the widespread knowledge that heart disease is the top killer of women, she said.

But there still are many unknowns, and still to come are significant changes in how doctors treat women patients, Steuer said.

She's especially encouraged about the focus on prevention.

"Part of the focus of women and heart disease is to try and get women to be more proactive, to take more responsibility for their heart health," she said.

Currently a group of U.S. senators and congresswomen is working to pass an act that aims to raise awareness, boost education about women and heart disease and increase the number of states eligible for funding to screen low-income women.