

# apple?



Women's College Hospital

new thinking



man?

When it comes  
to healthcare for  
women, you start  
by recognizing  
they're not men.

# Since we began in 1911 Women's College Hospital has been dedicated to a single mission: groundbreaking advances in women's health.

Women's College collaborated in the invention of the Pap Test. We opened the first Cancer Detection Clinic in Ontario to screen healthy women for early signs of cancer. We were the first hospital in Ontario to use mammography and the first in Canada to have a Perinatal Intensive Care Unit. We began Ontario's first regional Sexual Assault Care Centre and delivered the nation's first test-tube quintuplets. We launched Canada's first Multidisciplinary Osteoporosis Program and established the country's first Women's Cardiovascular Health Initiative. And the list goes on.

Today, our attention is turned to one of the most important and under-recognized healthcare realities. Put simply, when it comes to health, women and men are not the same.

Sound too obvious to mention? Perhaps. But until recently, most medical researchers assumed that men and women were basically the same, and most research to prevent, diagnose and treat disease was done on men.

As it turns out, that's a big mistake. Men and women are very different when it comes to disease. Not only are some diseases exclusive to women, but there are many diseases and conditions that affect men and women differently.

Take heart disease. Women typically show symptoms of heart disease up to ten years later in life than men. And when these symptoms do appear, they can be strikingly different than those presented by men. Yet women's symptoms often go unrecognized. What's more, men tend to be treated more quickly for cardiac symptoms, receive cardiac interventions faster and more frequently than women, and are referred more often to cardiac rehabilitation than women.

Then there's lung cancer. Women who smoke are about 50 per cent more likely to develop lung cancer than male smokers. Even non-smoking women are more likely than non-smoking men to develop lung cancer. The reasons? No one is absolutely sure (through researchers suspect women are more susceptible to DNA damage than men are).

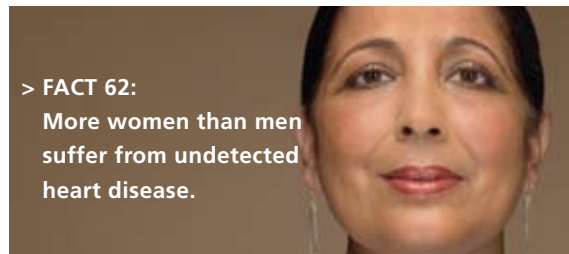
Unfortunately, there is still an astounding lack of evidence-based research about healthcare for women as well as a lack of appropriate treatments. But things are changing. Internationally, women's health research has expanded tremendously over the past 25 years. Where its sole focus used to be reproductive issues, women's health research is now a multidisciplinary, multidimensional field that addresses a huge range of topics. And all over the world, governments are paying increasing attention to the gendered dimensions of health with new policies, new protocols and more dedicated resources.

In Canada, Women's College Hospital is generating new knowledge and pioneering new approaches and technologies in support of women's health. We're also leading the way globally in new developments. We're looking both at how sex – in terms of physiological and biological differences – and gender – in terms of social roles and practices – affect women's health and healthcare. And we're translating that knowledge into better and more effective clinical practice.

There's simply no getting around it. Women are different from men when it comes to health. And there is nothing more important to Women's College Hospital than women's healthcare. That's why, as the following pages will show, we're doing everything possible to promote leading-edge research and to provide state-of-the-art services around women's health.

Because when you're at the forefront of women's health, you treat women differently.

> FACT 62:  
More women than men  
suffer from undetected  
heart disease.



DETECTING  
THERAPY-RESISTANT  
TUMOUR CELLS IN  
LUNG CANCER PATIENTS

hope for women?

## Not until now.

Most medical research has traditionally been done on men.  
Most findings have been extrapolated from male subjects.  
And most research has applied a male yardstick to female health.

Women have paid the price.


That's why Women's College Hospital has established Canada's largest research institute dedicated solely to generating knowledge about women's health. Called the Women's College Research Institute (WCRI), it is leading the charge in breakthrough research around women's health.

In just over a decade, our accomplishments are nothing short of amazing. Breech births are safer because of our research. We're a world leader in understanding the genetics of breast and ovarian cancers. And we can now identify the potential for osteoporosis in young women.

A large part of our success is due to our unique research model. We're the only Canadian facility that tests women's healthcare innovations within an ambulatory care community. We employ a holistic approach to research – we think about the patient as a whole person, from the health of their cells to their social well-being. We have a network of over 100 women's health researchers, and are the founding partner of a one-of-a-kind Collaborative Graduate Program at the University of Toronto. And we are renowned for our success in piloting new services and disseminating best practices. Here's just one example. The first Sexual Assault Treatment Centre opened at Women's College in 1984, and has since spawned a network of 34 hospital-based sexual assault centres across the province.

But we're not resting on our laurels. While we remain profoundly committed to advancing the health of women everywhere, we're now the first and only independent ambulatory care hospital in Ontario. That means we have a lot of work to do. Ideally, we are committed to transforming the system to better meet the needs of women and their families. In the process, we'll leave no stone unturned as we examine and evaluate how each and every element of ambulatory care must work: its organization and delivery, its integration and measurement, and its training, research, education, and promotion.

As always, our commitment to creative and courageous innovation continues unabated.



> FACT 9:  
Women who smoke are  
about 50% more likely  
to develop lung cancer  
than male smokers.

# HIV treatment for women?



## Think again.

The reality is, women are responding differently to some HIV treatments than are men, often resulting in different and more frequent side effects – some of which are fatal. The reason? No one is absolutely sure. But we do know one thing. Women have been hugely underrepresented in anti-HIV therapy trials.

Getting treatment right for women with HIV is more urgent than ever. Women in Canada account for about a quarter of all people who test positive for HIV every year. They represent one of the fastest growing groups affected by HIV in this country. And women are biologically more susceptible to HIV infection from heterosexual sex than are men.

Surprising then, that research on HIV in women is drastically lacking. At Women's College Hospital, we're taking steps to remedy that. Our *Women and HIV Research Program* is designed specifically to help women with HIV. Led by acclaimed research scientists, the program is breaking new ground in research and clinical care.

One of our main goals, for instance, is to identify which combination of anti-HIV therapies optimizes the virological and immunological effects while minimizing the negative impacts on both a woman's body and quality of life.

To ensure that women's needs become front and centre, we conduct research that is deeply integrated with both community organizations and women living with HIV.

In fact, collaborations are integral to what we do on so many fronts and take place at the provincial, national and international levels. We work with a coalition of over 30 Ontario-based organizations from the legal, health, settlement and HIV/AIDS sectors to improve treatment and service access for marginalized people with HIV/AIDS. We work with St. Michael's Hospital on pregnancy and HIV. We work with York University and St. Michael's on mental health issues associated with HIV. We work with Women's Health In Women's Hands, our community-based treatment delivery partner. And we work with physicians from Ethiopia and South Africa to assess HIV psychiatry needs in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Of great significance is our contribution to POWER, a study that will produce an Ontario-wide report card to identify problems in our systems of care, support appropriate policymaking and ensure that we have indicators that measure the accessibility, effectiveness and health outcomes for women's HIV care in Ontario.

How women are treated when it comes to HIV/AIDS is a function of how well we understand them physiologically, emotionally and socially. And it's a matter of treating the whole person, not just the disease. At Women's College, we're expert at both.



> **FACT 132:**  
HIV drug therapies  
given to women  
have been tested  
predominantly on men.



a case of the flu?

## Unfortunately, not this time.

The fact is, women are too often incorrectly diagnosed and treated when it comes to heart disease. Symptoms are dismissed or misinterpreted. Fewer women than men are sent for surgical intervention (like a bypass or angioplasty). And women are less likely to be referred for cardiac rehabilitation – despite the fact that they fare much better when they have it.

It just doesn't make sense.

Women, particularly younger ones, are more likely to die of a cardiac event than are men within the first year of recovery. In about a third of the cases, that's because women are typically older when they have their first cardiac episode and they may be more likely to suffer from diabetes. But in most cases, it's simply not clear why there is such a discrepancy in morbidity and mortality rates.

Is it physiological? Might it have something to do with the lining of women's arteries or with hormonal changes? Or is it gender-related? Do women take on too many household and family responsibilities following a heart attack?

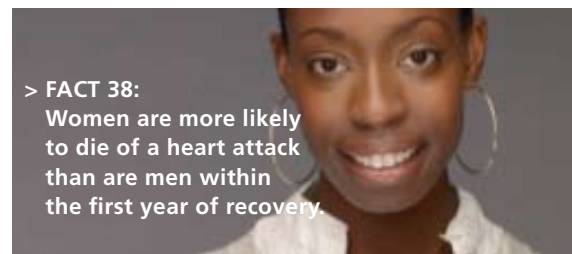
We don't know the answers. But once again, Women's College Hospital is leading the way in addressing the problem. We offer Canada's only cardiac prevention and rehabilitation program designed exclusively for women.

*The Women's Cardiovascular Health Initiative (WCHI)* is for women who have heart problems now – or might be at risk in the future. For those who have already suffered a cardiac episode, we deliver a personalized program based on small group and one-on-one exercise and education. For women with risk factors – diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and a strong family history of cardiovascular disease – we offer a prevention program also based on exercise and education.

The outcomes have been impressive. Across the board, we've seen a decrease in waist circumference, blood pressure and cholesterol. In our rehab program, we've seen an astonishingly low drop out rate – 15 per cent versus the 45 per cent that's traditionally found among women in other rehab programs. In fact, our program is poised for expansion so that we can reach more of the women who need us.

Why the difference? We think it has to do with the way our program is designed. Because we're focused on women, we take into account that they learn differently from men. We do research to learn what women value in a program – small groups and safety are paramount. And because we understand that women drop out more because of responsibilities at home, we address the issues through support and counseling.

At Women's College Hospital, we think women shouldn't be treated like men when it comes to heart disease. The women whose lives we're helping agree.



> **FACT 38:**  
Women are more likely to die of a heart attack than are men within the first year of recovery.



happily ever after?

## Less often than we'd like.

Every year in Ontario, 50,000 new mothers get the 'baby blues.' They're inexplicably sad when everyone thinks they should be overjoyed. They're exhausted but cannot sleep. They're unable to concentrate and they're not interested in eating. These symptoms usually last just a short time after delivery.

But for 10,000 Ontarian women, the symptoms are much more severe and enduring. These women are depressed during pregnancy or have postpartum depression, a serious condition that is too often dismissed as trivial or even self-indulgent. The reality is, perinatal depression can be one of the most serious forms of depression. What's more, the stigma attached to it can be debilitating. At Women's College, we see postpartum depression as urgent.

That's why we're working on a province-wide system to reach women as quickly as possible. It's why women are welcome to bring their babies along when they come for mental health treatment. It's why we provide telephone support to healthcare providers who are in need of urgent expertise and to patients who are medically unable to travel to the hospital. It's why we refuse to close our waiting list, no matter the demand. And it's why we're conducting world class research to identify gaps in knowledge and pinpoint areas that need greater research focus.


In fact, at Women's College, we deal with many mental health issues that are unique to women. One of our most important programs – the *Reproductive Life Stages Program* – addresses anxieties and depression related to a woman's reproductive stages: pre-menstrual syndrome, pregnancy, post-partum depression, and menopause. We're proud to say we have one of the largest programs of its kind in Toronto and are one of only a handful in Canada.

But we don't look at reproductive mental health in isolation. Rather, it is inextricably linked to two other major programs offered by Women's College Hospital.

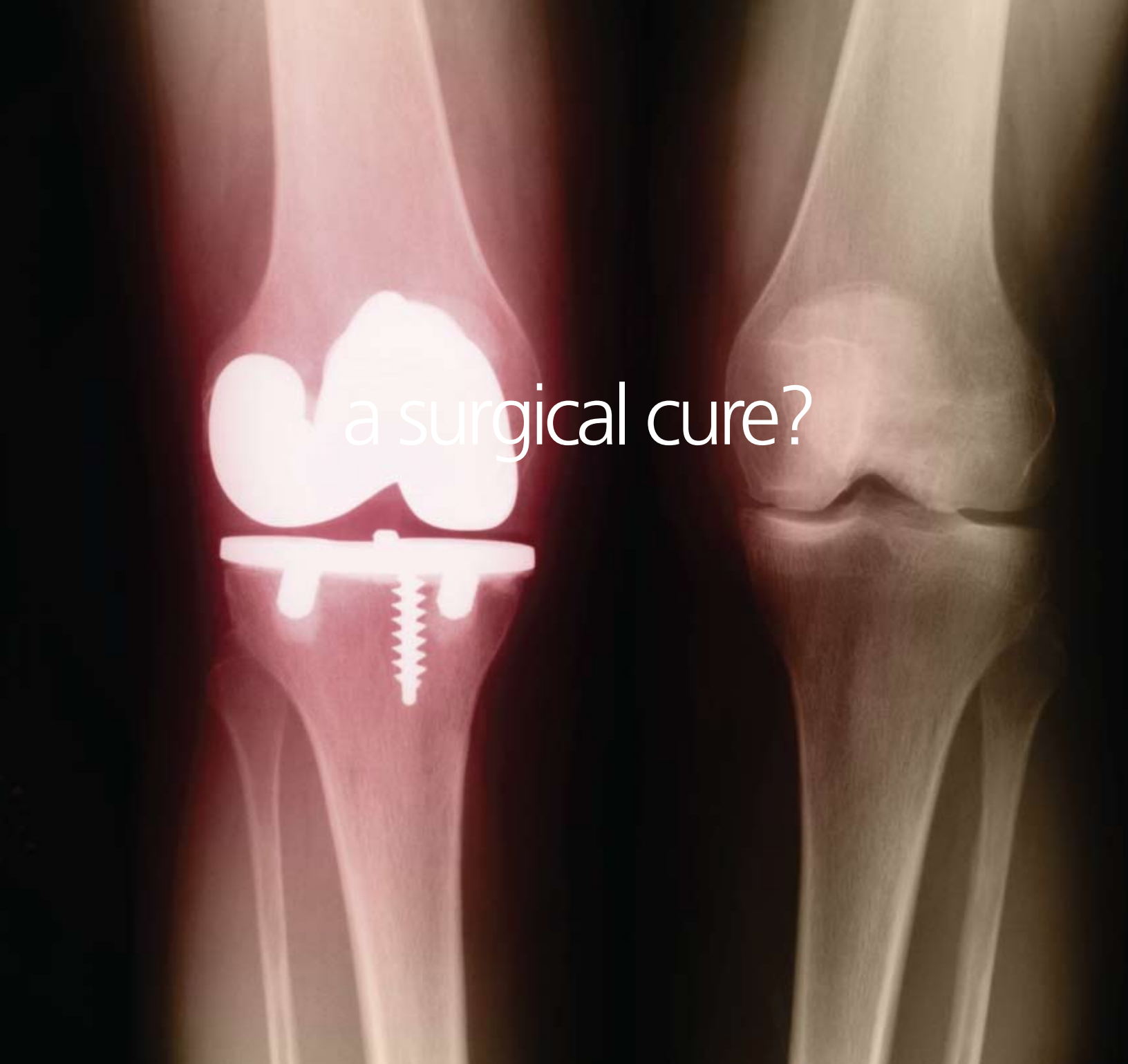
Our *Mental Health in Medicine* program deals with the mental health problems connected to medical illness: the psychological consequences of coping with a new diagnosis or a chronic disease; psychiatric problems that can compromise treatment; and psychiatric symptoms caused by medical disorders and medications. The program is focused on the psychiatric aspects of medical conditions that are common in women, such as thyroid disease (which affects nine times as many women as men), polycystic ovary syndrome and diabetes mellitus (where pregnancy and fertility are major issues).

Our *Trauma Therapy Program* helps women and men dealing with sexual abuse, violence, emotional and physical abuse, and neglect. While it's not news that women are more likely to experience trauma than men, it is news that an inter-professional team of psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses, psychiatrists, creative art therapists, and social workers – all trained in trauma-focused therapy – work to address the trauma-induced challenges faced by our patients. We've got the only trauma day treatment program in Ontario, and one of the largest trauma therapy programs in Canada.

It's not surprising, then, that Women's College Hospital is becoming a world leader in areas connected to women's mental health. After all, who better to understand the mental health of women than a hospital dedicated to breakthrough advances in women's health?



> **FACT 45:**  
Women are twice  
as likely as men to  
experience depression.



## Only for some of the women who need it.

The results are in. Recent research has found that men complaining of knee pain are twice as likely as women to be referred for knee replacement surgery.

But according to research conducted by Dr. Gillian Hawker, Chief of Medicine at Women's College Hospital, women need replacement surgery more than men – two times more, in fact. After all, two thirds of Canadians with arthritis are women. And, women are twice as likely to be disabled by arthritis as men. Still, women are three times less likely to get the surgery.

Not only are women not being offered the surgery as frequently as men, women are also saying they don't want it. The reason? Women are much more likely than men to live alone, to have lower incomes and to be socially isolated. Many are simply not able to care for themselves after surgery.

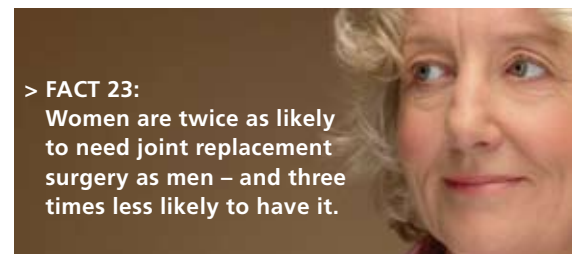
At Women's College Hospital, we understand that women make decisions differently than men – often because of their gender roles. Women, in general, want to discuss their options more than men do. They tend to want more information and are often more eager to try alternative therapies. They sometimes need extra visits.

We accommodate that. At Women's College, we believe in informed decision-making. We believe in engagement and respect. We believe that it's senseless to separate the physiological and social realities of health. We believe in developing a system of care that meets women's health needs best.

That's precisely what our *Multidisciplinary Osteoarthritis Program* is designed to do. It offers a 'one-stop' approach to care that takes into account the priorities, needs and choices of each patient. Focused predominately on hip and knee osteoarthritis, the program enables clients to access a full team of specially trained professionals – physicians, pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists and clinical nurse specialists – who, along with the client, collaboratively develop a personalized program.

The need for such a program is urgent. About 1.4 million Canadians suffers from arthritis and it is the number one disabling disease in Canada. Osteoarthritis exacts a tremendous toll on health, finances, and independence. The services we provide – and the way we provide them – must continually improve to meet new health challenges. That's why Women's College also conducts research. We look to explain why men and women receive different care. We develop strategies to remove barriers to care. And we test the efficacy of those new strategies.

Our success has been groundbreaking, measured not only in the number of our peer-reviewed grants and publications, but also in our popularity as a site for graduate training. Our achievements are a testament to the close integration between research and practice, a defining element of Women's College Hospital.



> **FACT 23:**  
Women are twice as likely to need joint replacement surgery as men – and three times less likely to have it.

Since we began in 1911,  
Women's College Hospital has  
been dedicated to a single mission:  
groundbreaking advances  
in women's health.

Today, Women's College is focusing on one of the most important and under-recognized healthcare realities. Put simply, when it comes to health, women and men are not the same.

This booklet is the first in a series that unveils how Women's College Hospital is doing everything possible to generate new knowledge, and pioneer new technologies that promote women-specific prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Because when you're at the forefront of  
women's health, you treat women differently.

