

## **New NIH-funded Yale center to treat women smokers**

Yale UniversityYale University



Yale scientists have been awarded competitive National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding to establish a new research center that will develop gender-sensitive treatments to aid women in quitting smoking.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of illness and death, resulting in almost a half million deaths per year in the United States alone. Quitting smoking is the single most important change a person can make to improve their health—yet women have more difficulty quitting than men. The success rate for quitting has been lower for women every year since the federal government began keeping records in the 1960s.

The new Yale-Specialized Center of Research on Women’s Health is funded by a \$6 million, five-year grant from the National Institutes of Health Office of Research on Women’s Health, and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

“Women smokers face greater health consequences including higher risk for lung cancer and cardiovascular disease,” said the new center’s principal investigator Sherry McKee, associate professor of psychiatry at Yale. “So there is a real need to develop treatments that are sensitive to gender differences in tobacco dependence.”

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In addition to McKee, the center will be led by Carolyn M. Mazure, professor of psychiatry, as scientific director, and Marina Picciotto, the Charles B. G. Murphy Professor of Psychiatry, Neurobiology and Pharmacology, and Kelly Cosgrove, assistant professor of psychiatry and diagnostic radiology, who will lead pivotal studies within the center.

Current FDA-approved medications for smoking cessation all target the nicotine receptor to some extent but this may not be the optimal approach for women. “While men are more likely to smoke for the reinforcing properties of nicotine, which coincides with the success of nicotine replacement therapies for men, women are more likely than men to smoke to regulate mood and relieve stress,” McKee points out. “This suggests an important difference for the development of effective smoking-cessation treatments.”

The new center will have strong ties to [Women’s Health Research at Yale](#) [1], the university’s 14-year-old interdisciplinary research center on women’s health and gender differences, and the NIH-funded junior faculty training program led by Mazure. This training program, Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women’s Health, is funded by the Office of Research on Women’s Health, NIDA, and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The collaboration among these centers and programs will bring together basic and clinical scientists to investigate new neurobiological targets for gender-sensitive therapeutics, and mentor junior investigators to conduct interdisciplinary translational research. Together, these combined efforts will provide a national resource to galvanize the study of sex and gender differences in relation to smoking, Mazure said.

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### **Links:**

[1] <http://medicine.yale.edu/whr/index.aspx>