# Endometriosis underfunding and misdiagnosis expose gender bias in healthcare



Women’s health, particularly concerning conditions like endometriosis, is often relegated to the margins of medical research and education. This critical issue is underscored by a personal account of a student who faced considerable challenges following an unexpected diagnosis of endometriosis. The student narrates the harrowing journey from experiencing debilitating pains to navigating an inadequate healthcare system, shedding light on the gendered disparities that persist in medical treatment and research.

The journey began with plans for a relaxing trip to Lisbon, thwarted by sudden and severe pain. Initial assessments by medical professionals led to a misdiagnosis of a kidney infection, ultimately culminating in a hospital stay due to a significant ovarian abscess. It was during this tumultuous time that the student began to question the healthcare responses she received. After surgery to remove the abscess, the diagnosis of endometrioma pointed to the underlying condition of endometriosis. Yet, the follow-up care and understanding provided by medical staff left much to be desired.

Endometriosis affects approximately 190 million women globally, yet it remains significantly underfunded. Data reveals that in 2022, only $16 million was allocated to endometriosis research by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, a stark contrast to the $90 million dedicated to Crohn’s disease, which affects far fewer individuals. This disparity illustrates a longstanding neglect of women’s health issues that not only costs lives but also impacts productivity and quality of life.

The student’s experience reflects broader systemic failings in the medical community’s understanding of conditions predominantly affecting women. As journalist Gabrielle Jackson points out, women are often left waiting longer for pain relief and are more likely to have their symptoms misattributed to psychological factors. This has resulted in substantial delays in diagnosis, with many women waiting between seven to ten years. Such delays can lead to serious and life-threatening complications, exacerbating the physical and emotional toll these conditions take.

In recent years, efforts to rectify these discrepancies have emerged, such as the Biden administration's commitment of $100 million to women's health research. This initiative aims to bridge the gender gaps evident in funding and support for conditions like endometriosis. Moreover, entrepreneurs like Elise Mekkaoui are leveraging technology to create artificial intelligence solutions that may expedite diagnosis and treatment for conditions such as endometriosis, addressing the urgent need for innovation in women’s health.

Educational gaps about women's health perpetuate a culture of silence surrounding issues like endometriosis. The prevailing narrative often only focuses on reproductive capabilities while neglecting broader health education. This lack of knowledge leads many to rely on self-diagnosis and extensive personal research to understand their bodies and conditions.

As noted by multiple experts, including those at the National Institutes of Health, rectifying these imbalances is crucial not just for individual health outcomes but for societal wellbeing. Investing in women's health could contribute economically, with potential gains estimated at $1 trillion annually by 2040, merely by improving health outcomes and addressing chronic pain that disproportionately affects women.

The student's story is one among many, capturing the urgent need for greater attention and investment in women's health research and education. While academic institutions like Trinity did offer support through extensions and understanding during periods of illness, the broader healthcare system's failings became apparent. It is evident that continued advocacy and systemic changes are requisite to ensure that women receive timely and informed medical care, allowing them to navigate their health journeys with dignity and support.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://universitytimes.ie/2025/05/my-experience-as-a-student-with-endometriosis/), [[3]](https://time.com/7171341/gender-gap-medical-research/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://universitytimes.ie/2025/05/my-experience-as-a-student-with-endometriosis/), [[6]](https://endocaretherapeutics.com/2025/03/03/endometriosis-research-underfunded/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/031bb23c-5c2d-41be-8f72-570fe94a711b), [[5]](https://www.axios.com/local/boston/2024/02/21/white-house-jill-biden-womens-health-research-arpa)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/campus/article/2024/04/29/using-artificial-intelligence-to-detect-endometriosis_6669828_11.html), [[5]](https://www.axios.com/local/boston/2024/02/21/white-house-jill-biden-womens-health-research-arpa)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://universitytimes.ie/2025/05/my-experience-as-a-student-with-endometriosis/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/031bb23c-5c2d-41be-8f72-570fe94a711b)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://universitytimes.ie/2025/05/my-experience-as-a-student-with-endometriosis/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/campus/article/2024/04/29/using-artificial-intelligence-to-detect-endometriosis_6669828_11.html> - Elise Mekkaoui, a 26-year-old entrepreneur, founded Matricis.ai to develop AI technology for quicker and more reliable endometriosis diagnosis. This innovation addresses the challenges in MRI image analysis, aiming to reduce the pain and infertility caused by delayed diagnoses. Supported by professionals like physicist Raphaelle Taub, the project has attracted attention from institutions such as INRIA. After training the software and conducting clinical experiments, Mekkaoui plans to commercialize it and potentially expand its use to other female-specific health issues. ([lemonde.fr](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/campus/article/2024/04/29/using-artificial-intelligence-to-detect-endometriosis_6669828_11.html?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://time.com/7171341/gender-gap-medical-research/> - Medical research has historically been male-dominated, leading to gender biases that affect our understanding of diseases and treatments. Women's bodies are biologically different from men's, which means they can experience different symptoms and responses to treatments. There have been strides towards correcting this imbalance, such as the NIH's Sex as a Biological Variable initiative and a 2024 executive order to advance women's health research. However, significant gaps remain, especially in areas like oncology, cardiovascular diseases, psychiatric disorders, and female-exclusive conditions like menopause and endometriosis. Women are often underrepresented in clinical trials and funding for research on diseases that disproportionately affect women is insufficient. Furthermore, findings are often not separated or analyzed by gender, leading to inadequate treatment responses. Greater representation, funding, and education regarding gender differences in medical research and practice are necessary to address these disparities. ([time.com](https://time.com/7171341/gender-gap-medical-research/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/031bb23c-5c2d-41be-8f72-570fe94a711b> - Women are more likely to experience severe and chronic pain but often receive substandard treatment compared to men. This disparity, known as the gender health gap, leads to a significant negative impact on women's health and incurs enormous costs globally. Research indicates that improving women's healthcare could add at least $1 trillion annually to the global economy by 2040. Conditions like endometriosis and menopause contribute to women losing 75 million years to early death, disability, and suboptimal health annually. Despite women constituting the majority of chronic pain sufferers, most pain research focuses on male subjects, leading to biased treatment outcomes. The gender health gap exemplifies broader systemic issues where women's health needs are dismissed or inadequately addressed. Addressing this gap requires better diagnosis, research that includes female patients, and efforts to eliminate biases in healthcare. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/031bb23c-5c2d-41be-8f72-570fe94a711b?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.axios.com/local/boston/2024/02/21/white-house-jill-biden-womens-health-research-arpa> - The Biden administration has committed $100 million to women's health research, as announced by First Lady Jill Biden. This federal investment aims to close gender gaps in research, which have led to insufficient funding for conditions like endometriosis and multiple sclerosis, disproportionately affecting women. The initiative emphasizes the importance of creating a healthcare system that prioritizes women's lived experiences. Subsequently, founders of startups, investors, and health advocates met with ARPA-H officials to discuss various issues affecting women's health. ([axios.com](https://www.axios.com/local/boston/2024/02/21/white-house-jill-biden-womens-health-research-arpa?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://endocaretherapeutics.com/2025/03/03/endometriosis-research-underfunded/> - Endometriosis affects 190 million women worldwide, yet research funding remains disproportionately low. In 2022, the U.S. National Institutes of Health allocated just $16 million to endometriosis research, a mere 0.04% of its total budget. In contrast, Crohn’s disease, affecting far fewer people, received $90 million. This stark disparity reflects systemic neglect of women’s health issues, costing lives, livelihoods, and billions in lost productivity. Addressing this funding gap is crucial for improving diagnosis, treatment, and overall quality of life for those affected. ([endocaretherapeutics.com](https://endocaretherapeutics.com/2025/03/03/endometriosis-research-underfunded/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9127440/> - Endometriosis is a condition that impacts not only patients but their families, jobs, societies, and countries. The authors believe the present issues with diagnosing, treating, and funding endometriosis result from many years of misunderstanding and ignoring important female health topics. Improving funding for endometriosis research could improve the understanding of the condition, eliminate knowledge gaps, reduce time to diagnosis, expand available treatment options, improve pain management, and place a long-overdue emphasis on predominantly female experiences of illness. ([pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9127440/?utm_source=openai))