

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seven key areas in which the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation will be addressing ongoing efforts.

## Women's Health Issue #1: Cancer

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. If the spread is not controlled, it can result in death. In Wisconsin from 1999–2003, an average of 427.4 women per 100,000 were diagnosed with cancer each year. In 2006, researchers estimated approximately 26,390 Wisconsin residents would be diagnosed with cancer.<sup>1</sup>

Cancer can strike anyone, but the risk of developing cancer increases as people age. More than 76% of all cancers are diagnosed in people 55 and older.<sup>1</sup>

Cancer is second only to heart disease as the leading cause of death in Wisconsin among both males and females, with an average of 10,750 cancer deaths each year, from 2000 through 2004.<sup>2</sup>

Lung cancer was the leading cause of cancer death for Wisconsin women (22%) from 1999–2003, killing, on average, 1,152 Wisconsin women each year.<sup>1</sup>

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Wisconsin regardless of race, accounting for nearly one third of all cancers diagnosed in women. It was projected that in 2007, 3,900 new cases of breast cancer would be diagnosed among women in Wisconsin and 700 women in Wisconsin would die of breast cancer.<sup>3</sup>

In an average year, 235 Wisconsin women develop invasive cervical cancer and 57 women die of the disease.<sup>1</sup> Nationally, persistent and pervasive human papillomavirus (HPV) is the principal cause of cervical cancer, detected in over 99% of cases.<sup>4</sup>

Screening tests offer a powerful opportunity for the prevention, early detection and successful treatment of cervical cancer. In 2006, 86% of Wisconsin women aged 18 and older reported having had a Pap test in the past three years.<sup>1</sup>

With an average of 287 deaths each year, ovarian cancer was the fifth leading cause of cancer mortality for Wisconsin women from 2000–2004.<sup>2</sup> Nationally, ovarian cancer is the 7th most common cancer for women and causes more deaths than any other cancer of the female reproductive system.<sup>5</sup>

Colorectal cancer was the third leading type of cancer among Wisconsin women from 1999–2003, affecting, on average, 1,531 women annually. It was also the third leading cause of cancer death among Wisconsin women from 1999–2003 killing, on average, 556 Wisconsin women each year.<sup>1</sup>

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## Women's Health Issue #2: Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) refers to a variety of diseases and conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels, such as coronary artery disease, high blood pressure (hypertension), congestive heart failure, and brain attack (stroke).

The most common symptom first experienced by women with heart disease is death. Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) is the leading cause of fatality and disability among women across all racial and ethnic groups in Wisconsin.

There are many risk factors that predispose women to cardiovascular disease, some of which are simple lifestyle adjustments that will improve heart health.

- Stress
- Obesity
- Family history
- Diabetes
- Age
- Tobacco use
- Poor diet
- High blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Sedentary lifestyle

In 2006, more than 33% of all Wisconsin deaths (15,276) were due to cardiovascular disease; that's more deaths than cancer, AIDS, automobile crashes, domestic and alcohol abuse combined.<sup>1</sup>

Only 13% of women recognize heart disease as a serious health threat.<sup>2</sup>

Women who smoke have an increased risk for ischemic stroke and subarachnoid hemorrhage.<sup>2</sup>

About 93,000 hospitalizations (14% of all hospitalizations) in Wisconsin were related to cardiac diagnoses. Cardiac-related hospitalization charges amounted to more than \$2.8 billion.<sup>1</sup>

One in four Wisconsin adults reported having been told by a health professional that they have high blood pressure.<sup>3</sup>

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## Women's Health Issue #3: Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is an important issue that affects many families in our state. It is a pattern of aggressive and intimidating behaviors that abusers use to control their intimate partners. Abuse can be verbal, emotional, physical, sexual and/or economic and is based on power and control. In the U.S., domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women ages 15–44. This is more than the injuries due to car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.<sup>1</sup>

Approximately 85–95% of heterosexual physical and sexual violence among adult intimate partners is male against female violence.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

According to the American Medical Society, injuries from domestic violence account for 35% of visits by women to emergency rooms annually.<sup>2,3</sup> These medical costs exceed \$4.1 billion each year.<sup>5</sup>

In 2006, there were 25,531 domestic violence incidents reported in Wisconsin. The same year, 40 domestic homicides were reported in 19 counties across Wisconsin. The victims' ages ranged from one year to 85. Approximately half of all victims (48%) were 18–29 years old. Most often, victims were female, and killed in their residence by a family member using a firearm or knife.<sup>6</sup>

Nearly 1/3 of American women report being abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives and 3–10 million children witness that abuse each year. 50% of men who frequently assault their wives frequently assault their children.<sup>5</sup>

## Women's Health Issue #4: Mental Illness

The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that 26.2% of adult Americans live with a diagnosable mental disorder. Some mental illnesses can be caused by biochemical disturbances in the brain and others are triggered by exposure to an extremely stressful event. Current research studies are helping to clarify the risk and protective factors for mental disorders in women and to improve women's mental health treatment outcomes.

Mental health complications are one of the top five reasons for inpatient hospital admission for women.<sup>1</sup> Nearly twice as many women (12%) as men (6.6%) are affected by a depressive disorder each year. Major depression is the leading cause of disease burden among females ages 5 and older.<sup>1,2</sup>

Anxiety disorders, which include panic disorder, obsessive–compulsive disorder (OCD), post–traumatic stress disorder, phobias, and generalized anxiety disorder, affect an estimated 13% of all Wisconsinites. Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent mental illness in adults.<sup>3</sup>

In their lifetime, an estimated 3% of Wisconsin women will suffer from anorexia and an estimated 4% will suffer from bulimia.<sup>4</sup>

Schizophrenia is the most chronic and disabling of the mental disorders, affecting about 1% of Wisconsinites.<sup>5</sup>

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## Women's Health Issue #5: Osteoporosis

Every woman is at risk for developing osteoporosis.<sup>1</sup> However, there are several preventable measures women can take to reduce their risk of developing osteoporosis.

Women are never too young or too old to help keep their bones as strong as possible. Although nearly everyone loses some bone with aging, we can make inexpensive and safe lifestyle and dietary changes to prevent or combat osteoporosis (i.e. get enough calcium along with Vitamin D, avoid tobacco and alcohol, and engage in regular weight bearing physical activity from an early age).

By about age 20, the average woman has acquired 98% of her skeletal mass.<sup>2</sup>

Approximately 10 million Americans have osteoporosis, of which 80% are women. 34 million more Americans have low bone mass.<sup>1</sup>

African American women have the highest bone mineral density (BMD), followed by Caucasian/ Native American, Hispanic and Asian women with the lowest.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly ½ of women over age 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her lifetime.<sup>1,2</sup>

Medical treatment for osteoporosis-related injuries is over \$14 billion annually in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>

## Women's Health Issue #6: Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in Wisconsin. Smoking is often the underlying cause of disease responsible for death.<sup>1,2</sup>

In Wisconsin, there are over 8,000 tobacco-related deaths annually, with nearly 16% of all annual deaths in Wisconsin directly attributable to cigarette smoking and \$2.2 billion paid in direct health care costs.<sup>3</sup>

The prevalence of cigarette smoking among Wisconsin women in 2005 was 19.3%, compared to 18.3% nationwide.<sup>4</sup>

In 2006, the smoking rate among Wisconsin's pregnant women was 15%. That year, smoking during pregnancy affected 10,715 births in the state.<sup>5</sup> Data show that low-income women in Wisconsin report the highest rates of smoking during pregnancy. In 2005, 24.5% of Wisconsin Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Program clients smoked during their pregnancies and 23.5% of pregnant Wisconsin Medicaid recipients reported smoking during their pregnancies.<sup>6</sup>

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## Women's Health Issue #7: Alcohol Use

Wisconsin is number one in the country for all facets of drinking, which include teen drinking, heavy drinking, adult drinking and binge drinking. Consequently, alcohol use and dependency is often an overlooked health problem in Wisconsin, especially for women.<sup>1</sup>

Alcohol poses a heightened risk for women even in small quantities since alcohol affects women's bodies differently than men.<sup>2,3</sup>

Wisconsin women lead the nation in binge drinking, with 16% of Wisconsin women reporting they binge drink. The national average is 9.8%.<sup>4</sup>

A Wisconsin screening study reported that 32% of women reported drinking during pregnancy compared to the national average of 18%.<sup>5</sup>

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