

Women's Studies Seminar Series

A Healthy Heart Does Sex Matter?

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12.30-1.30

**School of Business
Mt Helen Campus
University of Ballarat
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**Women's Studies International
Forum**

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There are substantial gender differences in the pattern, severity and treatment of heart disease independent of environmental risk factor exposure. However this leads to the common misperception that heart disease is not a real problem for women. Recently, there has been considerable interest in the potential role of sex hormones in heart disease, particularly the potential protective effects of oestrogen. However, the failure of the recent clinical randomised trials to show a cardioprotective effect for hormone replacement therapy has refocused interest on the role of genes in cardiovascular biology and disease. Over the last decade, compelling evidence has emerged that sex differences in our vessels are not only determined by gender-related differences in sex hormone levels but also by genetic, gender-specific characteristics at the cellular level. This gender-dependent regulation may have important implications for understanding the basis of the gender gap in heart disease and may eventually lead to the development of sex-specific treatments. This lecture will attempt to summarise the current thinking for the role of hormones and genes in gender differences in heart disease and what it all means to women.