

Studies are beginning to find that some **pharmacotherapies** which work with men **do not help women**. Such findings can only emerge when the study includes a substantial number of women but this is rarely the case. Only by pooling two studies of disulfiram treatment of cocaine dependence were researchers at Yale University able to identify a significant gender effect. ❶ One study had allocated cocaine patients to therapy plus either disulfiram or placebo. In the other the same substances had been prescribed to cocaine-using methadone patients. Across both, women did equally well with or without the drug (just under 40% cocaine-free urines) but men did better on disulfiram, registering 49% cocaine-free urines versus 30% without.

An unusual near even male-female split in their sample enabled another set of US researchers to test gender differences in how dependent drinkers respond to the antidepressant sertraline. They had previously discovered that the drug substantially cuts drinking in type A alcoholics (late onset, relatively few psychological complications) while type B alcoholics (severely dependent, early onset, psychopathology) tended to do worse on sertraline ➤ *Links*. A later analysis showed that the benefits of sertraline were almost entirely confined to male type A alcoholics. ❷ If anything, women type As tended to drink more on the drug than when receiving a placebo. There are also some indications that naltrexone is less effective for female drinkers and that nicotine patches effectively help men stop smoking while for women the effects quickly fade unless supplemented by relatively intense psychosocial support.

❶ Nich C. *et al.* "Sex differences in cocaine-dependent individuals' response to disulfiram treatment." *Addictive Behaviors*: 2004, 29(6), p. 1123-1128. **DS**

❷ Pettinati H.M. *et al.* "Gender differences in response to sertraline pharmacotherapy in type A alcohol dependence." *American Journal on Addictions*: 2004, 13, p. 236-247.

LINKS

Nuggets
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