



Flying Blind

Uterine fibroids

Uterine fibroids are benign tumours of the female reproductive system. They affect women differently based on their size, number, and location within the uterus, and symptoms can include pelvic pain, abnormal bleeding, including heavy periods, prolonged periods, or bleeding between periods. Fibroids can also affect fertility, cause obstetric complications, painful urination, pain during sex, abdominal distention, and gastrointestinal symptoms like constipation.

▶ Uterine fibroids are estimated to affect 20-70% of women globally, and studies in the US have shown a three-times higher prevalence in Black women, suggesting ethnic disparities in developing the condition.



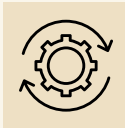
Global funding for uterine fibroids R&D was US \$12 million in 2023



R&D in this field is nascent, with 85.5% of funding going towards basic research



There are only 31 candidates in the pipeline



There was virtually no R&D investment reported for diagnostics, and no developments in the pipeline beyond traditional ultrasound and MRI techniques, which are not always accessible in low-resource contexts

More than

99%

of funding is provided by the US National Institutes of Health

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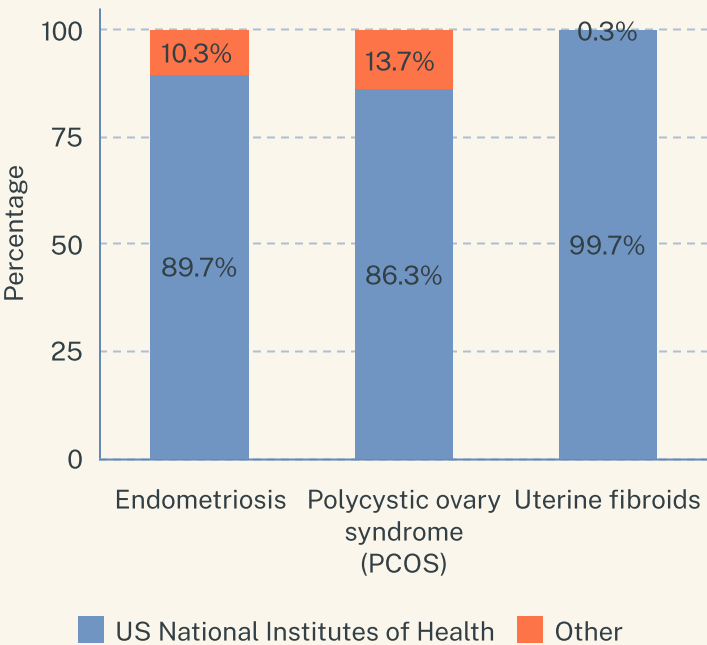
R&D funders:
US NIH and
UK MRC

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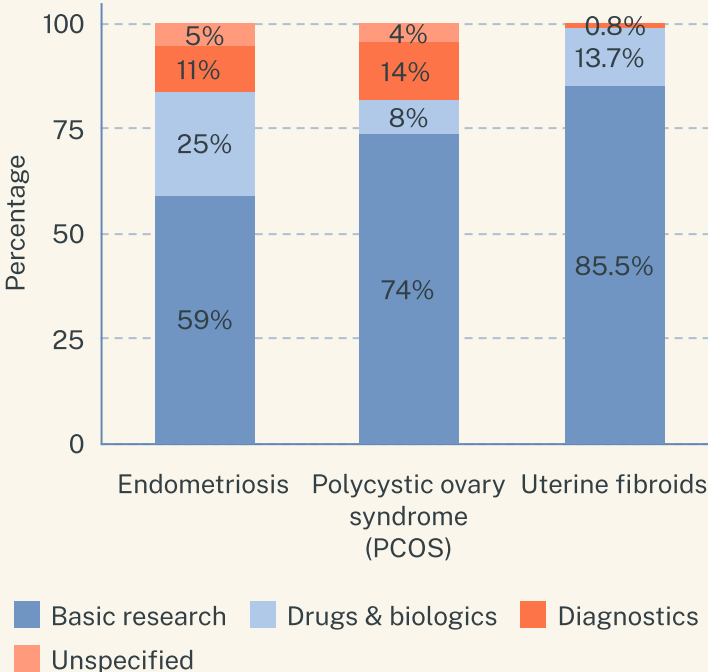
industry
investment
reported

	Drugs	Biologics	Devices	Diagnostics	Total
Available products	14	0	2	2	18
Pipeline candidates	27	1	2	1	31

Proportion of US NIH funding by condition (2023)



Proportion of R&D funding by research/product type and by condition (2023)



Key takeaways

- **Underfunded and neglected:** uterine fibroids, like PCOS and endometriosis, has suffered from decades of neglect and underinvestment in medical research, largely due to institutional and gender biases in healthcare.
- **No solutions:** despite there being 14 marketed medicines available for uterine fibroids, there are none that treat the underlying cause or offer a cure.
- **Limited diagnostics:** diagnosis of uterine fibroids entirely relies on imaging technologies with limited access in low-resource settings, and the non-existent diagnostics pipeline shows no new leads on the horizon.
- **Symptom management:** most therapeutics (drugs and biologics) focus on two symptoms: bleeding management and shrinking fibroid size,