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HORMONES IN THE NEWS

RECENT HEADLINES about hormone replacement are both accurate **and** deceptive. It is accurate to report that the drugs Premarin and Provera are poor medication choices based on their risks and benefits. It is deceptive to suggest the same risks and benefits apply to natural or bio-identical hormone replacement.

The stories are old news to those who understand the differences between bio-identical hormones and synthetic hormones, and in fact confirm popular convictions: *Premarin and Provera and other non-human hormones are not safe for humans.* Worldwide research, studies, experience and the drug manufacturers' own warnings long ago demonstrated the negative effects of these drugs. Many published clinical trials have already reported that the risk of breast cancer is increased by long-term use of Premarin, and increases even more when Provera is added to the regimen. [J Natl Cancer Inst 1997 Aug 6;89(15):1110-6] Many patients intuitively know something is not right with these synthetic hormones. Now the Women's Health Initiative Study affirms these convictions.

It is important to understand that the study was **not** conducted using human (bio-identical) estrogens and progesterone. The study used only Premarin and Provera (Prempro). In addition, it is documented that all hormones, *when administered in an oral tablet like this study*, stress the liver and gall bladder, produce carcinogenic metabolites and have other negative effects on the body.

The situation is analogous to the history of insulin use in diabetes. Until the early 1980s, the only insulin hormone available to give to diabetics was from cows and pigs. While this complex molecule from these animals is *almost* identical to human insulin, it differs by one or two amino acids. This seemingly small difference is enough to cause critical long-term problems in human beings.

When drug companies were able to manufacture the *exact* human insulin molecule in large quantities, it was proclaimed a major breakthrough in health care. Now, every patient prescribed insulin is given the exact same molecule that is unique to human beings. Why should hormone replacement be approached any differently? It only makes sense to use the *exact* same human molecule (bio-identical). And every day more and more evidence supports the use of bio-identical hormones and the restricted use or elimination of synthetic or non-human hormones. It is unfortunate that the lay press, scientific studies and even educated health care providers often group all forms of HRT together as if they were a single medication. In reality, women's experiences and clinical outcomes of HRT differ vastly depending on if the hormones are synthetic or bio-identical, and also on the route of administration (troche or cream vs. capsule or tablet).

In addition, unlike mass-produced hormones, bio-identical hormones can be custom-made to match the exact needs of the individual. Individualized dosing, bio-identical hormones and drug delivery systems that bypass the liver and digestive tract allow for maximized benefits without side effects. An estimated two million women are now benefiting from bio-identical estrogens and progesterone.

The news reports also neglect the reason 90% of all women take hormone replacement: to relieve menopausal symptoms like hot flashes, vaginal thinning and dryness, loss of libido, osteoporosis, forgetfulness, anxiety, thinning hair and bladder disorders. Evidence continues to support *bio-identical hormone replacement* as a safe and effective option for symptoms of menopause, and is most effective when coupled with dietary, nutritional and lifestyle changes.

Related topics:
What is a Troche?
Natural HRT