

Hormone Madness

by Raymond Francis

Quoting from Sherrill Sellman's book *Hormone Heresy*, "(The)... prescribing of synthetic hormones to women was the biggest medical bungle of the century." Though one might argue with her on which was the biggest bungle, this is way up there on the list. Millions of women have had their health, and the health of their children damaged by hormone therapies. This madness continues today... Fact: The largest selling drugs in America are medically prescribed synthetic hormones. If such drugs are truly "medical necessities," one has to wonder how it was possible for women to have survived so long without them. Why would anyone really need these hormones? There is little credible evidence that they benefit anyone, and indeed a litany of evidence that they do substantial harm.

One infamous bungle was DES; a hormone eventually banned because of its catastrophic side effects. DES was a synthetic estrogen given to millions of pregnant women in order to prevent miscarriages and other pregnancy complications. Mothers who took DES have a 40 to 50% greater risk of breast cancer. The daughters of DES-mothers typically develop: rare forms of vaginal cancer, structural damage to the vagina and cervix, abnormalities of the uterus and fallopian tubes, a high rate of miscarriages, a two to fourfold increase of squamous cell and cervical cancer, and generally impaired immune systems. This debacle isn't even over yet; apparently the damage may continue on for generations to come.

To understand why hormones are hazardous to your health, we must first understand a little about what hormones are, and how they work. Hormones are messenger molecules, which help the body to regulate itself. They usually work in pairs; one hormone turns something on, and another turns it off. In this way, hormones regulate bodily systems much like a thermostat. Problems arise because hormones exist in a natural but very sensitive balance, one easily upset by hormone therapy. Just a few molecules of a hormone can have a significant effect, and hormone therapy adds a lot of molecules, causing imbalances. Hormones interact with each other, so unbalancing one will upset them all. It is nearly impossible for hormone treatments to be both safe and effective because the interactions are so complex. The medical community attempts to solve this problem through "educated" guesswork. This is madness. We are playing games with our lives and those of our children, by choosing treatments that involve poorly understood and highly intricate chemistry.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and birth control pills make up the bulk of the synthetic hormone market. HRT became popular back in 1966 when Dr. Robert Wilson wrote his bestseller *Feminine Forever*. Wilson touted estrogen replacement as a fountain of youth. Estrogen, he claimed, would keep women young, healthy, and safe from "the tragedy of menopause, which often destroys her character as well as her health." Largely as a result of this book, estrogen was prescribed to millions of women. Ten years later, the long-term effects of the excess estrogen began to surface. Women who took estrogen for seven or more years were 14 times more likely to develop cancer. The long term "research" is always being done on us: the patients!

Embarrassed by such a blunder, the medical community's "solution" is to add synthetic progesterone (progestin) to the capsule, in theory to balance out the estrogen. They also changed the marketing thrust from keeping women young & beautiful, to preventing cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and even Alzheimer's. Of course, no long-term research proves that adding progestin prevents the problems

inherent with excess estrogen. In fact, progestin is also known to disrupt bodily processes, and has its own list of nasty side effects.

These drugs are simply not safe; too much evidence exists to the contrary. Quoting Dr. Lynette Dumble, a medical researcher at the University of Melbourne in Australia, "The supposed benefits of HRT are totally unproven." Dr. Dumble believes that HRT actually accelerates the aging process and contributes to a variety of medical problems. One such problem was highlighted by the Boston Nurse's Study, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health. The data revealed that women who took the combination of estrogen and progestin for 10 or more years increased their chances of developing breast cancer by 100%. In addition, women on HRT were 45% more likely to die from their breast cancer.

The perception that menopause is a disease, which requires medical intervention, is nutty. To assume that this "disease" is caused by an estrogen deficiency is even nuttier. To the contrary, menopausal symptoms are usually caused by excess estrogen. Menopause is and should be a virtually symptomless transition, as it is in most of Asia. Healthy women simply do not experience significant menstrual or menopausal problems. Keep the body well nourished and free of toxins, and trust it to manufacture and balance all the hormones it needs.

Estrogen Dominance from the Food Supply and the Environment

Birth control pills are another serious blunder in the realm of the underresearched... The FDA studied and approved "the pill" based on an experiment involving a mere 132 women—5 of whom died during the course of the study! (No investigation was done into the causes of their deaths.) By the mid-1970s, it had become obvious that the excess estrogen contained in birth control pills was causing women to die from heart disease and strokes. As a result, a pill with a lower dose of estrogen was created and marketed. (Of course this still doesn't work, because the only safe dose is none at all.)

The problem with both "the pill" and HRT is that women get too much estrogen. Estrogen stimulates tissue growth and cancer is tissue growth gone unchecked! Having excessive estrogen puts the body into estrogen dominance. Estrogen dominance is known to cause depression, weight gain, chronic fatigue, headaches, bad temper, breast fibrocysts, uterine fibroids, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, endometrial cancer, and breast cancer. Yes, some of the very things these pills are supposed to be preventing, they are actually causing! The Framingham Heart Study found that estrogen users had 50% more heart disease and twice as much cerebrovascular disease as non-users. Prolonged use of these drugs disrupts the delicate hormonal balances in the body creating biochemical chaos. It is not a coincidence that breast cancer has increased by 3% per year since 1980.

Since synthetic hormones damage human health, the obvious choice is to avoid them. Doing this is more difficult than it seems. Artificial hormone molecules, which contribute to estrogen dominance, get into our bodies in many ways. Hormones are used for promoting the growth of cattle in feedlots prior to slaughter. This practice leaves the meat laden with hormone residues; these molecules are then absorbed and integrated into our tissues. According to one published estimate, the amount of estradiol (a type of estrogen) in two hamburgers, when eaten by an eight year old boy, could increase his bodily estrogen levels by a medically significant 10%. In Europe, meat with hormone residues has been banned. Both prescription hormones and residues in food contribute to estrogen dominance. Estrogen dominance throughout the population is thought to be largely responsible for the massive increase in breast and reproductive cancers in both sexes. In men, testicular cancer has increased by 120% and prostate cancer by 230% since 1950.

Additionally, environmental chemicals can have estrogenic effects on the body. Numerous man-made chemicals, including pesticides, herbicides, and components of plastics, have the ability to attach to the estrogen receptor sites on cells and interfere with normal hormone chemistry. Alarming, these

chemicals are ubiquitous in our environment. They are not very biodegradable, they bioaccumulate in our fatty tissues, and they create hormone problems. Combine the effects of these environmental toxins, with the effects of hormones in the food supply and from prescription drugs, and it's obvious why estrogen dominance afflicts so much of our population.

Solutions to Estrogen Problems

So what should we do? Avoid anything that will increase estrogen in the body and contribute to estrogen dominance. Do not take birth control pills or hormone replacement therapy. Do not eat hormone-contaminated meat or dairy. (Meat and dairy also provide about 80% of a person's pesticide exposure, which creates estrogenic effects.) The diet should instead be rich in phytoestrogens, which are plant-based chemicals that favorably affect estrogen metabolism. Phytoestrogens attach to cellular receptor sites and effectively block the effects of more potent estrogens, thus reducing the potential for estrogen dominance. Soy products are rich sources of phytoestrogens—diets rich in soy and green vegetables are speculated to be the reasons why Japanese women experience few menopausal symptoms and also have low rates of breast cancer.

Estrogen stimulates tissue growth, while progesterone inhibits it. Working together in harmony they make a great team, but if estrogen is unopposed by adequate progesterone, then estrogen becomes dominant and trouble begins. For example, a 1981 study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found that women with low progesterone levels were over 80% more likely to develop breast cancer than those with normal levels. For women who are experiencing problems caused by estrogen dominance, it is possible to supplement with natural progesterone in order to restore the balance.

Natural progesterone is available in the form of creams, made from wild yams. Rubbing some on the skin will supply enough progesterone to help offset excess estrogen, and will have a significant effect on PMS and menopausal symptoms. However, this should be done under supervision, because it is possible to overdose. People with a wide variety of estrogen-related ailments have been cured using natural progesterone. Fibromyalgia is one of these, and its symptoms of muscle aches and pains respond well to progesterone. Dr. John Lee, author of *What Your Doctor May Not Tell You about Natural Progesterone*, pioneered in the study and use of this natural hormone.

Menopause is not a disease requiring medical intervention. Bad medicine, bad diets, environmental pollution, and lack of exercise cause its problems. Hormone-related health problems in our society stem from the fact that both men and women frequently experience estrogen dominance because of prescription drugs, estrogenic chemicals in the environment, sedentary lifestyle, and poor nutrition. If you are on HRT or "the pill", work with your doctor to gradually reduce the dose, and meanwhile go on a diet rich in fresh vegetables, legumes, grains, fruits, seeds, nuts, and supplements like Beyond Health. Don't participate in the hormone madness!

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