

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Michiel Rorick

New Findings Show That Discontinuing Hormone Replacement Therapy May Dramatically Reduce Risk of Breast Cancer

In 2002, new findings were released about the dangers of hormone replacement therapy (HRT), including linking it to a significantly elevated risk of invasive breast cancer. At that time, Dr. Rorick was eager to share this alarming evidence with patients.

Fortunately, the new findings led to a dramatic drop in HRT use, and heightened interest in alternative, all-natural approaches to menopausal symptoms, including the chiropractic approach.



What Were The 2002 Findings?

In 2002, a major study by the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) made headlines around the globe. The analysis included 16,608 women aged 50 to 79. The women were randomly assigned daily estrogen-progestin (conjugated equine estrogen 0.625 mg and medroxyprogesterone acetate 2.5 mg) or placebo.

"The primary outcomes were the occurrence of coronary artery disease (CAD) events (nonfatal myocardial infarction and CAD-related death) and invasive breast cancer." (*CMAJ* 2002;167:377-8.)

And that was only the beginning. Secondary outcomes included osteo-

porotic fractures, non-CAD related cardiovascular disease and cancer (endometrial and colorectal).

Dr. Rorick emphasizes that it is important to note that this study — the first randomized, controlled trial designed to assess the risks and benefits of prescribing HRT to prevent chronic disease — was halted just five years into its eight-year run. The reason? Researchers felt that it was irresponsible to continue subjecting the women to the hazards of HRT when it became obvious that the dangers far outweighed any benefits.

"HRT with combined estrogen-progestin causes net harm when used for an average of 5.2 years." (*CMAJ* 2002;167:377-8.)

Also in 2002, a long-term use of estrogen-replacement therapy can increase a woman's risk of breast cancer, according to a study of 705 women with breast cancer and 692 healthy women between the ages of 50 and 74. Lobular breast cancer in particular was associated with long-term hormone therapy. "Our data adds to the growing body of evidence that recent long-term use of HRT is associated with an increased risk of breast cancer." (*JAMA* 2002;287:734.)

Changes in HRT Use Since 2002

The good news is that following the alarming 2002 findings, use of HRT dropped appreciably.

About 30 percent of women older than 50 had been taking HRT in the early years of this decade. About half of these women stopped using HRT in late 2002 after the results of the studies were announced.

How Have Changes in HRT Use Affected Breast Cancer Risks?

According to a new analysis led by researchers at The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, breast cancer rates plummeted sharply between 2002 and 2003. The researchers speculate that this decline may largely be due to the fact that millions of older women discontinued using HRT.



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At the 29th annual San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium in December 2006, the investigators reported an overall seven percent relative decline in breast cancer incidence between 2002 and 2003. The steepest decline — 12 percent — occurred in women between ages of 50 to 69 diagnosed with estrogen-dependant breast cancer.

The researchers conclude that as many as 14,000 fewer women were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003 than in 2002.



What Do Researchers Say About the New Findings?

The study's senior investigator, Donald Berry, PhD, admits to being, at first, extremely surprised by both the magnitude and the rapidity of the decline in breast cancer incidence, but adds "it makes perfect sense" if you consider that use of HRT may be an important contributing factor to breast cancer development.

"Research has shown that ER-positive tumors will stop growing if they are deprived of the hormones, so it is possible that a significant decrease in breast cancer can be seen if so many women stopped using HRT," adds study co-author, Peter Ravdin, MD.

"It takes breast cancer a long time to develop, but here we are primarily talking about existing cancers that are fueled by hormones and that slow or stop their growing when a source of fuel is cut," says Dr. Berry. "These existing cancers are then more likely to make it under mammography's radar."

"Incidence of breast cancer had been increasing in the 20 or so years prior to July 2002, and this increase was over and above the known role of screening mammography," he notes. "HRT had been proposed as a possible factor, although the magnitude of any HRT effect was not known. Now the possibility that the effect is much greater than originally thought all along is plausible, and that is a remarkable finding."

"Something went right in 2003, and it seems that it was the decrease in the use of hormone therapy, but from the data we used we can only indirectly infer that is the case," adds Dr. Ravdin.

"But if it is true, the tumor growth effect of stopping use of HRT is very dramatic over a short period of time, making the difference between whether a tumor is detected on a mammogram in 2003 or not," continues Dr. Ravdin.

"It is the largest single drop in breast cancer incidence within a single year I am aware of."

Don't Forget

Unfortunately, since the shock of the 2002 findings has worn over time, many physicians have begun recommending HRT on an increasing basis. Pharmaceutical companies have also beefed up marketing campaigns.

It's vital for women not to forget or discount the 2002 findings, despite the resurgence of HRT promotion. Rather than rely on medication with such dire side-effects, turn to all-natural approaches to menopause, such as those advocated by doctors of chiropractic.

The Chiropractic Approach to Menopause

Doctors of chiropractic view menopause as a normal stage of a woman's life: not a disease. Experts agree that regular chiropractic visits can avert many of the symptoms associated with menopause.

Declining hormone levels, associated with menopause, increase the risk of developing osteoporosis through abnormal bone loss. This condition can subsequently lead to vertebral fractures, low-back pain and a variety of skeletal deformities.

In a recent study, 89 to 100 percent of the women who opted for alternative treatment of menopause symptoms reported relief of symptoms (*Obstet Gynecol* 2002;100:18-25).

According to the Committee on Research of the International Chiropractor's Association, The Kale Network and Kale Corporate Chiropractic, 73.4 percent of women with menopausal symptoms significantly improve with chiropractic care.

This chiropractic office takes a multifaceted approach to keeping menopausal patients symptom-free. Spinal health is the foundation of this unique approach. For instance, regular chiropractic check-ups keep the spine free of a common condition called **vertebral subluxation**, which has been linked with menopausal symptoms. Chiropractors correct vertebral subluxations with gentle and effective maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**.

In addition to keeping patients' spines free of vertebral subluxations, the doctor may recommend various all-natural approaches including aerobic exercise, soy, as well as specific dietary supplements and herbs.

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