

Post-HRT: Hormone is Not a Dirty Word

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The word “hormone” has alarmed menopausal women for decades. As hard as women try to regulate their hormones, it is clear, instead, that hormones regulate us. Thus, while we certainly can't live without hormones, it is increasingly obvious that we have a hard time dealing with them. Hormone has become a dirty word in the sense that people fear their potential effects. Media attention elucidating the dangers of heart disease and cancer while taking conventionally-prescribed hormone replacement therapy (HRT) certainly has fueled this fire. We must, however, recognize that hormones have important identities and play a unique, vital role in healthy aging.

Hormone Balance

The recent study (JAMA 2002) confirming the health dangers from HRT have made it critically clear that we need to reflect on the role hormones play in our lives and better understand how our lifestyles, including diet and exercise, influence their roles. Hormones were not even discovered and named until early in the 1900s, and we are still learning about their values and dangers.

Hormones are signaling messengers involved in almost every immune, nervous, sensual, psychological and reproductive biological process. They are also involved in growth, metabolism, strength, endurance and vitality. Hormones even control other hormones. Our quality of life depends on these hormones and critically, overall hormonal balance.

Health problems arise (such as increased risk for cancer) when too many hormones are given, or hormones from incorrect sources such as animals or plants cause imbalanced hormone signals throughout the body. Hormones in these scenarios can wreak personal havoc. Too high a concentration of any hormone, especially estrogen and progesterone, profoundly affects the workings of all neuro-immuno and endocrine systems, resulting in a condition called hypothalamic-pituitary axis dysregulation (HPA dysregulation). A wide range of serious health concerns can result. In fact, the Women's Health Initiative clinical study with almost 17,000 women was ended three years earlier than expected because researchers observed increased risks for blood clots, heart attacks, invasive breast cancer, and stroke in women using HRT (for more information about the Women's Health Initiative Study, visit <http://nhibi.nih.gov/whi>).

A New, Balanced View

Women use HRT not only to reduce the symptoms of menopause, but also to build bone density and protect against heart disease. However, HRT may have clear risks/adverse effects that outweigh the potential benefits, primarily due to too high a concentration of powerful signaling hormones. This is because when a drug affects the body, the body responds with beneficial and/or adverse side effects. Fundamental in pharmacology and cell-to-cell signaling is that too much of anything will cause adverse side effects from aberrant cell signaling.

A new paradigm for the post-HRT era is that healthy aging represents balanced signaling in the neuro-immuno-endocrine system. All hormone signals have counter-regulatory hormonal signals, and estrogen's counter-regulatory signal is insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1). Several research groups have published findings indicating that potential cancer cell targets of estrogen require IGF-1 to balance it and eliminate the danger. There is an additional human growth hormone (hGH)-IGF-1 axis throughout the body that plays critical regulatory roles in the neuro-

immuno-endocrine system. HGH stimulates IGF-1 production in the liver. The hGH-IGF-1 axis has significant mental, emotional, and physiological benefits that often appear similar to balanced estrogen levels.

Estrogen signals are actually balanced by the hGH-IGF-1 axis of signaling. In this HRT era, some researchers believe it is more logical to strengthen cell-to-cell communication with homeopathic signaling, rather than try to replace physiological levels of hormones, especially as evidenced by higher risks for cancer with HRT. Instead of using prescription-only hormones therapy, the discipline of homeopathy strives to bring the body into balance gently, safely, and consistently.

How Does It Work?

Homeopathy is the 300 year old medical tradition of using specific serial dilutions (often at less than 10^{-24} potencies) of the very substance that at much higher, pharmacological levels, would cause the very symptoms and suffering that the homeopathically prepared remedy is designed to alleviate. The signaling to specific cell receptor sites is not unlike when an aromatic molecule comes into the olfactory lobes and stimulates the nervous system to recall long-forgotten memories. Taking a hormone or growth factor-derived homeopathic preparation - a process which we developed and clinically-tested starting in 1995, likewise stimulates a cell receptor site response. Double-blind, placebo-controlled, multi-site clinical studies which have been peer-reviewed and published confirm the ability for such signaling to occur.

The body is designed for self-regulation. However, during the aging process, there is a progressive loss of information flow between the major organs. HGH and IGF-1 are especially important to cell repair, nutrient and mineral uptake, and cell renewal and survival. Both hGH and IGF-1 have unique structures that signal bone, heart, lungs, and brain to strengthen and optimally perform during aging.

There is a difference between a balancing signal in the body and the actual need for substance replacement. The difference lies in the art of cell-to-cell communication. All cells have cell membrane receptors on their outer surface that are highly specific for receiving signal message. There are many highly specific cell receptors for hGH and IGF-1 on the outside of the cell. Most hormonal signals are required to enter the cell in order to communicate their information and evoke cell changes. HGH and IGF-1 never need to enter the cell to deliver their signal and elicit consequential changes in psychological and physiological health. Lack of cell entry is safe since it required less metabolic activity and no energy requirements, hence stimulating a biological effect without leaving a trace of evidence.

Homeopathic hGH and IGF-1 have been demonstrated to aid women during the aging process. Double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical studies have indicated that homeopathic hGH strengthened women's hearts and increased their lean mass (including bone and cartilage), and decreased fat (*Altern Comp Ther* 1999). Oral hGH was demonstrated to significantly benefit women on psychological and physical measures compared with placebo groups.

Double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical studies indicated that homeopathic IGF-1 benefitted women by relieving their symptoms of hot flashes, uncontrolled appetite, chocolate cravings, breast tenderness, bloating, mood swings and most of the symptoms related to estrogen imbalances (*Alt Ther Health Med* 1997, *Integrative Med Inst*, Proving Report, 1997). Clinical studies have also demonstrated that the beneficial effects of a balanced hGH-IGF-1 axis on bone formation and that the administration of IGF-1 significantly increased bone density in anorexic women with osteopenia, a condition where there is less bone than normal (*J Clin Endocrinol*

Metab 87,2002). Currently tests are being conducted to determine if a combination of homeopathic hGH, IGF-1 and Leptin can improve fertility for older women who find themselves unable to conceive or carry to term.

Homeopathic hGH and IGF-1 can reduce hormonal stress without unwanted side effects. They can also restore the normal intercellular communication that accompany youth and health, and help provide optimal function in the face of chronic stress and aging. In the central nervous system, hGH and IGF-1 positively modify physiological, psychological and behavioral functioning. Under short term, acutely stressful conditions, hGH and IGF-1 are released rapidly in pulses, causing cell of target organs to alter their normal activity in order to respond to the acute stress signals, especially hormonal stress-induced signals. On-going case studies continue to demonstrate the effectiveness of homeopathic hGH in balancing the Somatostatin-GH-IGF-1-GHRH axis for relieving symptoms of PTSD, such as stress, anxiety and insomnia.

This new post-HRT era invites women to reconsider and rethink their needs and the consequences of their potential choices during aging. Let us choose the safest, most effective approaches as we age.