



The Care Group, P.C.

Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy Provides Effective Treatment Option for Post-menopausal Women

By Gerard L. Guillory, M.D.

Over the past few months I have been receiving increasing numbers of inquiries regarding bioidentical hormone replacement therapy, or BHRT, for post-menopausal women.

BHRT was the subject of a recent installment of "The Oprah Show" television program and has been covered extensively in the news media as well. See, for example, the March 16, 2009, issue of *The Wall Street Journal*, which includes an informative opinion piece on the topic.

At The Care Group, P.C., we offer BHRT and have found that it makes a significant positive difference in the lives of women whose bodies no longer produce sufficient hormones to ensure optimal health and wellness. We test patients to determine whether they are experiencing hormone deficiencies and then work closely with compounding pharmacists, who help us individualize and balance a combination of the sex hormones estrogen, progesterone and testosterone for each patient.

Until a few years ago, post-menopausal American women were commonly given one of these three therapies: a synthetic hormone called Premarin, which is derived from the urine of pregnant horses; a synthetic progestin called Provera; or a drug called Prempro, which is a combination of Premarin and Provera. Low testosterone, often a cause of low libido in women, typically wasn't even considered in the mix.

In 2002, a study by the National Institutes of Health found that Premarin/Provera increased the risk of heart attack, stroke, and breast cancer. The study, referred to as the Women's Health Initiative, or WHI, led many women to stop therapy and simply try to tolerate mood swings, depression, anxiety, hot flashes, decreased libido, vaginal dryness and other post-menopausal symptoms. Others tried taking anti-depressants, which did nothing to address the underlying problem. Many physicians were simply unsure how to help these patients.

As the recent *Wall Street Journal* opinion piece noted: "Sadly, seven years after the WHI study finding Premarin/Provera unsafe, the hormone-replacement debate can be summed up in three words: confusion, ignorance, and misinformation. Meanwhile, millions of women have embraced bioidenticals, leaving their conventional physicians looking stubborn and foolish."

"The medical establishment must stop kowtowing to drug companies and start serving women's best interests—and that involves widely prescribing bioidentical hormones."

We have been providing BHRT for several years and have found it an excellent alternative for women seeking to alleviate troublesome post-menopausal symptoms. Extensive research conducted in the United States and Europe suggests that bioidentical hormones—that is, hormones

that are biologically identical to naturally occurring human hormones—are safer and more effective in treating postmenopausal women than are synthetics. An overview of the research regarding BHRT appears in the January 2009 issue of the journal *Postgraduate Medicine*.

“A thorough review of the medical literature supports the claim that bioidentical hormones have some distinctly different, often opposite, physiological effects to those of their synthetic counterparts,” the author concluded. “With respect to the risk for breast cancer, heart disease, heart attack, and stroke, substantial scientific and medical evidence demonstrates that bioidentical hormones are safer and more efficacious forms of HRT than commonly used synthetic versions. More randomized control trials of substantial size and length will be needed to further delineate these differences.”

An additional advantage of BHRT is that dosing can be adjusted and balanced in order to meet each patient's unique needs. Synthetic hormones, in contrast, tended to be offered in set doses and as such were harder to individualize. At The Care Group, our practice is to test, treat and retest so that we can ensure that patients' hormones are balanced to optimal levels.

If you would like to be tested for hormone deficiency or learn more about bioidentical hormones, please visit us at The Care Group.

Gerard L. Guillory, M.D., is board-certified in internal medicine and has been practicing in Aurora, Colo., since July 1985. As an assistant clinical professor of medicine at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Dr. Guillory is actively involved in teaching medical students, resident physicians, and nurse practitioner students. He has lectured extensively on the role of nutrition and disease. Over the years, he has fostered an interest in patient education and has authored three books on digestive troubles. He also has served as medical director of a Colorado-based health plan and as a health consultant to employer groups.