



INTERNATIONAL MENOPAUSE SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE CLIMACTERIC IN MEN AND WOMEN

Press Statement

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WISDOM study: Re-confirming improved quality of life in all HRT users

The British Medical Journal features this week another article on the effects of postmenopausal hormone therapy on parameters of quality of life¹. The WISDOM (Women's International Study of long Duration Oestrogen after Menopause) study, conducted in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, had some similarities to the Women's Health Initiative (WHI). Both studies were randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, and used the same combined conjugated equine estrogen-medroxyprogesterone acetate standard-dose hormonal product. As a result of the early cessation of the WHI trial in 2002, the WISDOM study was also stopped, allowing only a short follow-up period for data collection. Participants were 50–69 years old at recruitment, with a mean age of 62 years, and most women (70%) did not suffer from vasomotor symptoms or sleep disturbances (55%) at baseline.

Using validated methods of measuring well-being and quality of life, the authors showed that, after 1 year, significant improvements were observed in the following domains for those taking combined hormone therapy compared with those taking placebo: vasomotor symptoms, sexual functioning, sleep problems, aching joints or muscles ($p < 0.001$ for all). Analysis of the results for the subgroup of women reporting hot flushes at baseline revealed that, in 78% of hormone users, the hot flushes disappeared entirely, while this occurred only in 35% of women in the placebo group. Similarly, 67% of women with night sweats at baseline who were allocated to the hormone group became symptom-free at 1 year, as compared to 38% of those on placebo treatment. The corresponding results for the symptomatic women in the WHI

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study were as follows: 77% of women using hormones reported an improvement in hot flushes at 1 year as compared to 52% of women using placebo; the figures for night sweats were 71% and 53%, respectively².

This study has demonstrated that, even in women without hot flushes who were well past menopause, there was still a measurable improvement in quality of life and a noted improvement in sleep, sexuality and joint pain.

This study shows just how effective hormone therapy can be in alleviating hot flushes and sleep disturbances and in generally improving other components of quality of life and well-being. It is regrettable that recent misinterpretation and exaggeration of the potential risks of long-term hormone use have caused false perceptions among many physicians and women and these well-documented benefits are being ignored. In particular, the latest data from the WHI study have demonstrated the safety of hormone therapy in healthy women during the early postmenopause, so women who are symptomatic and wanting an improvement in their quality of life should be reassured and encouraged to discuss the option of hormone therapy with their physicians.

References

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