
Focus on Health

John R. Woodward, M.D.,P.A.
Gynecologic Endocrinology,
Gynecologic Urology

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Bone Size vs. Bone Density

A new study indicates that bone size is just as important as bone density in assessing fracture potential in postmenopausal women. Both are directly related to estradiol levels (the lower the level, the worse the loss of both density and size) in women who do not receive hormone replacement therapy. Fosamax and Actonel decrease bone loss but do not stimulate new bone formation. Estradiol does both.

Hand Washing Studies

The hands of health care workers can serve as vectors for transmitting bacteria from one patient to another. A Chicago study repeatedly obtained culture samples from the hands of surgical intensive care nurses during working hours. Wearing rings was a significant risk factor for hand colonization with Staph, colon bacilli, and yeast, and colonization rose with the number of rings on each hand. Hand washing and alcohol hand rubs were twice as likely to fail to eradicate the organisms in ring wearers.

SAYS WHO?

Two analyses, using very different approaches, showed several kinds of bias in the publication of pharmaceutical-sponsored drug studies. All of the biases resulted in publication of more favorable accounts of the studied drugs. These findings suggest a certain amount of "calibration" is required when interpreting vendor-sponsored research.

Cancer Protection

A Swedish study indicates that hormone replacement therapy use protects women against smoking-associated cancers regardless of the type of HRT and the amount of smoking.

As part of the professional services I feel should be provided by me to my patients, screening of the voluminous medical literature has become more and more important. Please read this now if you have time before I see you, so that we can further discuss whichever topic especially interests you.

Perhaps you have seen an item that I have not included in this list or have not seen myself. If so, feel free to bring it to my attention.

New Drug Old Drug

The next drug to be approved in the U.S.A. for hormone substitution (already used in Europe) may be Tibolone. It was developed in the 1960's to treat osteoporosis, but also improves vaginal dryness and decreases hot flashes. There is minimal improvement of mental function and balance. No increased risk of uterine cancer has been found. Although C Reactive protein is increased by 3 to 4 times, no definite detrimental effect on cardiovascular disease has been documented. The effect on breast cancer risk differs between studies and will await future results. No evaluation of protective effect on colon cancer is reported. It is an improvement on Premarin, Provera, and Prempro, which should be taken off the market. Hormone replacement with non-oral human estradiol and progesterone remains the method of first choice in my opinion.

John R. Woodward, M.D.,P.A.
7777 Forest Lane, Suite A338
Dallas, Texas 75230
(972) 566-7870