

Focus on Health

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Gynecologic Endocrinology

Cure or Cause

The FDA warns (in OB-GYN News) of severe musculoskeletal pain tied to osteoporosis drugs such as Fosamax, Actonel, and Boniva. This group of drugs, known as bisphosphonates, has been on the market for many years, but this side effect has never been emphasized until this alert was issued. The cause of the side effect is unclear at present.

Breast Cancer and Weight Gain

Weight gain after breast cancer diagnosis ups the mortality risk by 14% according to a study from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. This brings up an interesting question. Since a weight control drug called Acomplia seems effective in treating both conditions, is there a common link?

Chocolate & Acne

Does chocolate make acne worse? Not directly, but a food that increases insulin secretion as chocolate does can lower sex hormone binding globulin and thereby raise free testosterone levels leading toward acne.

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Inaccurate Blood Testing

Blood testing (as opposed to saliva testing) to evaluate hormone levels is only superior if it is done correctly by a reference laboratory such as InterScience Institute, Inglewood, California. Most commercial labs do not do the preliminary extraction of metabolites and contaminants necessary to make hormone testing accurate. Unfortunately, these reference labs are being driven out of business by HMO's who refuse to pay for tests that are done by them. Money (or the lack of it) is at the root of the problem (i.e., insurance companies).

Less Aggressive Treatment Healthier

A higher death rate among diabetics treated aggressively to lower their blood sugar prompted the government to halt one part of a major study of diabetes and heart disease called ACCORD in February 2008. A separate study in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that not pushing blood sugar levels so low was just as effective with less risk of heart associated deaths.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy

In many parts of the world hyperbaric oxygen therapy is considered a key component of an effective Multiple Sclerosis treatment program and is thus covered by insurance.

MRSA Tests

A two-hour blood test for methicillin resistant staph aureus (MRSA), the dreaded bacteria threatening us all, is now available but the FDA warns that the test should not be used as the sole basis for diagnosis. Traditional tests (cultures) require 48-72 hours for confirmatory results.

Folic Acid/B12 & Renal Disease

Lowering homocysteine blood levels in patients with severe renal disease using folic acid and B12 tablets has not produced any reduction in cardiovascular risk in studies so far, as had been hoped, according to Journal Watch. Nevertheless, I recommend them in this situation.

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. The information in this newsletter is derived from periodicals and books which I have read and whose information I have consolidated. 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.

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