

# Focus on Health

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## Metabolic Syndrome

A Gallup poll showed that 40% of women perceive breast cancer as their greatest health threat, compared with just 4% who expect to die from heart disease. One of the major predisposing factors for coronary heart disease is metabolic syndrome (insulin resistance). The prevalence of metabolic syndrome in this country continues to rise. Overall, 47 million people (24% of the adult population) have metabolic syndrome, and by age 60 nearly 40% of women have the condition.

## Unhappy Doctors

A survey done with resident physicians a year ago showed that only 4% were unhappy with their career choice. The same survey done a year later with senior resident physicians now finishing their training and preparing to begin their careers in medicine shows that 24% are unhappy with having chosen medicine as a career. That does not bode well for them, for medicine, or for the patients for whom they will be caring.

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## Heart Disease Risk

A huge discrepancy between two studies has shown up concerning the risk of heart disease in women taking hormone – “substitution”. The Harvard Nurses’ Study, the gold standard for 30 years and still in progress, shows a 61% decrease in heart disease with estrogen use. The Women’s Health Initiative, published in July, 2002, shows a 29% increase in heart disease. Why the huge difference? In my view, a major reason is that over two thirds of the women in the Women’s Health Initiative were over 60 when they joined the study and started taking hormones. The damage done by waiting 10-15 years after menopause before HRT was started was already there and neither estrogen nor anything else can reverse the damage once it has occurred. Also, both studies used Premarin as their estrogen rather than real human non-oral estradiol, which is what they should have used.

## Cancer Protection

A Dutch study on 20,000 people found that those who took a “statin” (Lipitor, Zocor, Pravacol) to lower cholesterol and protect against heart attacks also reduced their risk of cancer by 20%. After more than 4 years of use, the reduction was 40%! Those who stopped the statin for more than six months seemed to lose cancer protection.

## What's Blue Lizard?

Most sunscreens guard against sunburn, but do not block invisible UVA rays which can cause basal cell skin cancers and melanoma. A sunscreen called Blue Lizard is available that protects against both sunburn and cancer. Call 1-800-877-8869 or on the web at [www.bluelizard.net](http://www.bluelizard.net). The pharmacy in the lobby of Medical City Building A has it as well.

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.

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