

SUMMARY

Menopause is that point when permanent cessation of menses occurs following the loss of ovarian activity. Menopause is characterized by hormonal changes, elevated levels of follicle stimulating hormone and luteinizing hormone, decreased level of estradiol which mainly results from adrenal steroidogenesis and peripheral conversion of andro-steredione. Finally estrogen levels are insufficient to maintain secondary sex characters.

Hormonal changes are reflected on women's health in the form of different types of problems and complaints. Vasomotor, urogenital, psychological, sexual and sleep problems are common; however, the most serious problems are cardiovascular diseases and osteoporosis.

Hormone replacement therapy is one of the few medical interventions that have the potential of preventing and treating morbidity in postmenopausal women, thus improving the quality of living.

Deciding whether to use HRT after menopause is a difficult decision many women face as they age. Research has shown that HRT is very effective for relieving menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes and genital atrophy as well as reducing and/or prevention the risk of osteoporosis and depression among the elderly female population.

Recent research has demonstrated that long-term use of estrogen either alone or in combination with progesterone results in more risks than benefits. These risks include breakthrough bleeding, breast tenderness, weight gain and mood swings. However, there are also known health risks about long-term use such as breast cancer, stroke, venous thromboembolism, ovarian cancer, endometrial cancer, and gallbladder stones and cancer and coronary heart diseases.

Alternative medicine focuses on compounds such as Soy, Selective Estrogen Receptors Modulators, Tibolone, Bisphosphonates such as Alendronate, Newer antidepressant, Gabapentin, Clonidine, Belladonna, herbal remedies that had been shown to be effective such as Ginseng, Calcitonin, Vitamins such as vitamin D,E,C Magnesium, Fish oil and many non-therapeutic alternatives e.g. Acupuncture, many preventive measures such as exercise smoking cessation and fall prevention and many physical activities such as physical exercises, bodywork techniques as massage and mind-body techniques as yoga, tai chi and many other relaxing techniques.

There is some evidence that phytoestrogens may offer protection against a wide range of postmenopausal symptoms including breast cancer, cardiovascular disease, brain dysfunction, osteoporosis, and menopausal symptoms. Previously available only in the diet, phyto-estrogens are now widely available in pill or powder form, and are marketed to the public as "natural" hormone.

One of the most important alternatives of HRT is Tibolone (Livial), which is very effective in preventing and treatment of osteoporosis and hot flushes; also it reduces the vaginal dryness and dyspareunia.

Selective estrogen receptors modulators are effective in wide range of postmenopausal complains specially these associated with breast cancer and endometrial hyperplasia or cancer.

Bisphosphonates are the 4th most important alternative in management of postmenopausal osteoporosis through their bone forming action but they should be used in upper gastrointestinal troubles and contraindicated in renal impairment and gastric ulcers.

Alternatives medicine actually have been shown to alleviate the discomforts of menopause: hot flush, night sweats, heart palpitations, and vaginal dryness, as well as to reduce the risk of osteoporosis and heart diseases, in addition avoiding side effects and risks of prescribing hormone replacement therapy such as breast cancer, endometrial carcinoma, ovarian carcinoma and coronary heart diseases.

Thus, alternative medicine is considered a new era for treatment of postmenopausal symptoms diseases similar to HRT in its advantages but without its serious risks.