

THIRD PRIZE PAPER

Topical Progesterone Cream: An Alternative Progestin in Hormone Replacement Therapy

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OBJECTIVE: The current progestins employed in HRT are associated with bothersome side effects. A possible alternative is the transdermal application of progesterone cream (PC). However, its endometrial effect has not been compared to standard hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Thus, we designed a prospective randomized crossover study to compare standard HRT to estrogen/PC regimen.

METHODS: Healthy menopausal women were recruited and received a pretreatment endometrial biopsy (EMB). They were randomized to daily 0.625 mg conjugated equine estrogen and 2.5 mg medroxyprogesterone (Prempro, Wyeth) or daily 0.625 mg conjugated equine estrogen and 20 mg transdermal PC (Progest, Aresta). At the end of 6 months a repeat EMB was done and the woman was crossed over to the other treatment arm for an additional 6 months. A final EMB was performed after the last 6 months.

RESULTS: Twenty women completed both arms of the study. The average age was 55.3 y with an average time since the menopause of 7.2 y. Of the 40 posttreatment endometrial biopsies, 28 revealed atrophic endometrium and 12 proliferative endometrium (six in the oral HRT group and six in the estrogen/PC group). There was no evidence of cellular atypia in any of the specimens. The incidence of vaginal spotting was similar in both groups.

CONCLUSION: These preliminary data indicate that estrogen/topical progesterone cream has a similar effect on the endometrium as standard oral HRT.