

## Controversies in Menopausal Hormone Therapy

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This special issue of *Endocrine* is devoted to exploring controversies related to menopausal hormone therapy. The database of information about hormone therapy has grown over the past 2 years, in part from findings from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) and the Million Women Study. When the WHI combined hormone therapy arm was closed in July 2002, the "expedited" release of information drew widespread attention from the media, medical community, and menopausal women across the country. In publishing expeditiously, the results had not undergone final adjudication. The controversies have grown as the subsequent papers, with final adjudicated data and additional analyses, have modified the original findings. These papers have not received the attention that was afforded the original announcement, leading to confusion and debate within the medical community. Understanding that clinical practice evolves with the science, this issue contains a broad range of articles from a variety of perspectives to encourage the current discussion.

Although 2 years have passed since the findings from the combined hormone therapy arm of WHI were first released, and it has been over 1 year since the publication of the Million Women Study, the medical community is no closer to consensus on what the findings from these studies are; in fact, the case can be made that we are moving further apart. Allowing this debate to continue to polarize and confuse the

medical community does not bring patients closer to an understanding of the appropriate uses of menopausal hormone therapy.

The irony is that the WHI, which was designed to answer some specific questions about hormone therapy, has actually spurred more questions than it answered. The value of the study is clear; however, the clinical application of the data to the individual woman is not so simple. The confusion has been heightened by the Million Women Study results, published in *Lancet* in 2003, and the initial publication from the estrogen alone arm of the WHI, published in *JAMA* in 2004. Women and their physicians are left with more questions, and need more information.

In lieu of the availability of the raw data from WHI that would add to the clinical value of these discussions, it falls on the medical and research communities to continue this evolving analysis with the available publications. Remaining open to all perspectives and experiences that are supported by data will remain critical if we are to get the most out of the research.

Greater reflection and a more considered approach to understanding the information conveyed from these and other studies have already substantially modified the interpretation of their results. It is hoped the articles included in this issue, along with those already in the literature, will assist the reader in interpreting these complex issues.