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Post-menopausal therapy to improve women's quality of life

The passing of time makes ovaries lose their ability to produce estrogens and progesterone, the hormones which regulate the menstrual cycle. In this stage, when menstruation ceases, there appear physical and psychical changes such as hot flushes, sweating, vaginal dryness, articulation and bone pain, headaches, insomnia, sadness, depression and loss of memory, known as climateric symptoms. In Spain, the average age for the cessation of the menstrual cycle is 50 years old. In the Western countries, about 17% of the population belongs to the post-menstrual group.

Against the discomfort derived from the cessation of menstruation, there are medical treatments which contribute to maintain the quality of life of women in the face of the described changes. One of the treatments proposed is the so-called Replacement Hormone Therapy (RHT).

Fears about this therapy have been erroneously exaggerated, attributing to it secondary effects such as weight gain, breast cancer and risk of a thromboembolic disease.

A study carried out at the University of Granada on more than 500 postmenopausal patients rationalizes the fears above mentioned; and it concludes recommending the use of the hormone therapy, if necessary, for at least five years, under periodic medical controls.

The study

The research work has been read as a doctoral thesis by Dr Otilia Ruth González Vanegas, under the supervision of Dr José Luis Cuadros López and Dr Rosa María Sabatel López (Department of Medicine of the UGR, San Cecilio University Hospital) and Dr Ángela María Cuadros Celorrio (Hospital of Úbeda).

The work, entitled "Five-year later assessment of the use of different models of Replacement Hormone Therapy (RHT) during post-menopause", started from the question: "¿how long must RHT be used considering the beneficial and adverse effects?". They studied the clinical histories of 534 women who, between 1989 and 2004, have attended periodically medical, laboratory and mammography tests at the Menopause Unit of the San Cecilio teaching Hospital of Granada.

González Vanegas' study also concludes that the discomfort derived from menopause falls in the first six months of application of any of the RHT, with the consequent improvement in women's quality of life.

The observations allow to conclude that, regardless the type of hormone therapy followed, the symptomatology improves, there are no weight changes, the lipid profile improves (cholesterol, triglycerides); bone quality gets better and breast cancer is less frequent than in general population, especially in the group which only received estrogens.

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The results of this research work have been published in journals such as Climateric or Menopausia.

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