

## POSTER ABSTRACTS

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### Women's Health 08

#### Women and Hormone Use in the Light of New Evidence

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**Background:** Prior to the findings of the Women's Health Initiative (WHI), it was believed that hormone therapy (HT) provided numerous health benefits. With WHI, however, considerable doubt was raised regarding prior assumptions. To better understand what women who were using HT are doing and thinking in the light of recent findings, we conducted a survey. Its purpose was to assess HT usage (maintenance, discontinuation or change), health behaviors, symptom control and overall concerns.

**Methods:** Women who had a prescription for HT (PremPro or FemHRT) between 1/1/2002 and 6/30/2002 were identified through pharmacy records and stratified by duration of hormone use (recent users [ $< 1$  year], women with 1-5 years of use and long-term users [ $> 5$  years]). A random sample of 10% from each stratum was selected for a total of 1200 subjects. Surveys were mailed with questions on hormone use, awareness of study findings, changes in medication use or health behaviors, what influenced changes, symptoms, use of alternative medications and overall concerns.

**Results:** The response rate was 70%. Of these, 69% claimed they discontinued HT. The main reasons stated for starting HT were symptom relief (70%), and bone health (46%). Many women (35%) did not consider how long they would take hormones. However of those that did, only 21% thought it would be short term. Most assumed they would continue on HT "as long as they felt okay." When asked how they learned of the new study findings, twice as many cited television and magazines than their health plan. Only 19% claimed to make no changes, others discontinued, stopped then restarted, or changed their HT. Minimal change was reported in use of alternative medications or in life style

**Conclusions:** Women appear to be heeding the warnings and taking initiative for changes regarding HT, rather than being encouraged at the initiation of their providers. They are concerned about current symptom control and also if past usage puts them at risk for future health problems.