

Understanding the Hormone Continuum: From Menarche to Menopause

Despite their important reproductive and noncontraceptive roles, oral contraceptives (OCs) appear to be underutilized by both younger women of reproductive age and perimenopausal women, evident in part by the high rates of unintended pregnancies and abortions in the United States each year. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is similarly underutilized, with only a portion of eligible patients receiving therapy. In this era of cost containment, any increased use of hormonal therapy will obviously be associated with greater pharmacy costs. This potential conflict and the means of optimizing outcomes from both economic and therapeutic perspectives were explored at the symposium, *Understanding the Hormone Continuum: From Menarche to Menopause*, held Wednesday, April 18, 2001, in Tampa, Florida. The symposium included a discussion of the economic impact of OC and HRT use from a managed care

perspective, demonstrating that relatively small expenditures for hormonal therapy result in substantial savings not only from the prevention of unintended pregnancy but also from the many noncontraceptive health benefits associated with their use. Other presentations explored the selection of pharmacologic parameters to enhance therapeutic benefit, increase compliance, and improve the cost effectiveness of these therapies. Data also were presented on the efficacy and expected economic impact of a new transdermal contraceptive system that is expected to become available during the first quarter of 2002. Finally, the reasons that deter patients from accepting or continuing with OCs or HRT were discussed and ways of improving counseling to overcome these obstacles were suggested. Highlights of these presentations are presented here.

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