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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE FOR TREATMENT OF MENOPAUSE – A BETTER WAY TO TREAT MENOPAUSE SYMPTOMS AND REBALANCE HORMONES

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ABSTRACT

With menopause studies showing dangerous risks associated with conventional western style hormone replacement therapy (HRT) it's time to look at some of the other viable options now available for helping women going through menopause. The options include nature-based alternative and integrative treatments, including Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and Acupuncture. Studies show that both are highly effective and successful in eliminating menopause symptoms and hormone imbalances associated with this "big change" in the woman's life. TCM is safe, holistic and cost-effective and it helps alleviate symptoms not by suppressing them but by replenishing imbalances related to loss of hormones and age induced deficiencies involved with the menopause syndrome. TCM can also rebalance individual body constitution and restore physiological homeostasis this helps to prevent further illnesses associated with the postmenopausal cascade. This review studied the facts and took a modern look at the evidence on both conventional style HRT and alternative and integrative TCM menopause treatments. Conclusively what the results revealed is that TCM can and does provide viable supplemental menopause treatment while alleviating symptoms and it can provide women who are sensitive to conventional style HRT with another option. This research is significant because it reveals options that are immediately that are available now for all who are in need and for the women of the future generations that may need help with menopausal symptoms as well - to comfortably get through the experience.

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INTRODUCTION

Menopause is nothing new! In fact, women worldwide have been experiencing menopause and hormone related health problems within their lives from ancient times.

Menopause breakdown

Physically, menopause involves changes in the woman's body - she is born with millions of eggs within the follicles of the ovaries that she will never use - it's during menopause, that these follicles decline in numbers and the ovaries grow less responsive to the Luteinizing Hormones (LH) and Follicle-Stimulating Hormones (FSH) –that are involved in reproduction. These aged ovaries basically release fewer amounts of these hormones, and these deficient amounts can no longer regulate estrogen, progesterone and testosterone levels - these changes consequentially start many years before menopause – but significantly impact the health and life of the

woman before and after the change, with peri and post menopausal phases.¹ Contrary to what many believe menopause not only impacts reproductive health and ability - it also impacts the whole body physiologically and even the mental stability, through the psychological health of the patient.² These are some of the classic symptoms and health problems related to menopause

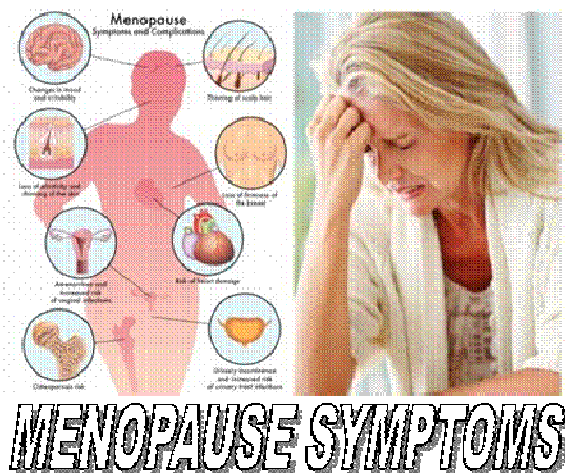
Hot flashes
Night sweats
Weight gain
Mood swings
Bone loss = osteoporosis
Insomnia
Depression
Fatigue
Low libido – sex drive
Vaginal dryness
Foggy memory
Infertility

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¹ www.advancedacupuncture.com/conditiontreated/menopause

² <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>



Menopause treatments are necessary for women who need help due to sensitivities to these symptoms. In the ancient times in China the problems associated with menopause were documented as early as the 14th century - in the book of DANXI ZHIFA XINYAO there are chapters dedicated to gynecological issues, childbearing and menopausal pain.³ Dong Gui is a popular TCM medicinal herb that has been used for over 2000 years for hot flashes and night sweats which are 2 very common menopause symptoms.⁴ Even in the book NEIJING SUWEN ca100BC there is mention of the changes in the female body due to the 7 year intervals of development, specifically noting that...

“AT 49 YEARS the Ren and Chong channels are completely empty and the “Tiangui” has dried up, hence the flow of menses ceases and the woman is no longer able to conceive.”

Yellow Emperor



For the menopause phenomenon associated with aging, the Ancients used tonics to nourish the kidney energy, the Qi and the blood.⁵ Knowing that all women would eventually be impacted by menopause, TCM specialists created natural therapies thousands of years ago to handle this problem.⁶ Although they didn't have knowledge of chemicals back then they were clever enough to coordinate a combination of active nutraceutical ingredients from TCM medicinals and medicinal foods mainly plant based – to induce a healing response. TCM specialist used these ingredients in formulas of synergistic combinations and in conjunction with TCM acupuncture and Tuina to form a combined treatment approach.

³ www.acupuncture.com/newsletters

⁴ Menopause treated

www.advancedacupunctureny.com/conditiontreated/menopause
www.empowher.com/holistic-health/content/kidney-yin-deficiency-rest-and-healthy-diet-aid-treatment

⁵ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

www.replens.com/FAB-Blog/Fighting-Vaginal-Dryness/23/Menopause

⁶ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

Acupuncture and Tuina are also so valuable for menopause they are mentioned as early as 3 A.D. for easing symptoms.⁷ Together they offer a powerful option for soothing and treating woman's symptoms - as well as impacting the root cause.⁸ The use of TCM formulations is especially important because each formula being they are individualized contains ingredients selected especially for that woman's specific diagnosis and syndrome differentiation. These formulas are very important for helping *each* woman overcome *her* specific, individual problems with menopause while eliminating the root causative issues as well, without suppressing the illness and driving it deeper.⁹ The objective with this research is clear; to show substantial supporting evidence of the efficacy of TCM prime alternative or integrative menopause treatments. This being necessary because after several years of witnessing the dangers of conventional therapies, aging women are truly in need of safer, more viable options.¹⁰ The power of TCM medicine makes it a superior system for assisting women in resolving menopause problems naturally.^{11 12 13}



MATERIALS AND METHODS

⁷ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

⁸ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>
www.replens.com/FAB-Blog/Fighting-Vaginal-Dryness/23/Menopause

⁹ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

¹⁰ Cancer causes, prevention and risks associated with hormones

www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/hormones/mht-fact-sheet

¹¹ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

www.webmd.com/menopause/guide/understanding-menopause-treatment

¹² www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

¹³ www.acufinder.com

www.acupuncture.com/newsletters

Comparative analysis was done on HRT VS TCM

In the beginning chemical HRT started out as a very popular modern medical option for woman entering menopause – that was back around the year 1960, but unexpectedly as the years passed it was noticed that many women did not gain positive results from the treatment and instead ended up with health serious problems.¹⁴ In the west these women were especially impacted using HRT to mitigate menopause discomfort. HRT it especially popular in the west, there HRT was used is a naive attempt to completely avoid menopausal symptoms - they were caught off-guard and blind-sided by serious side-effects they experienced caused by using HRT.¹⁵



Originally they were motivated by HRTs' modern convenience, thinking it was something wise and helpful for their situation but soon realized that HRT was harsh for the body. With so many experiencing problems physicians were confused and grew cautious. Many of the women were impacted from serious side-effects, including deadly diseases, so studies were ordered to verify the actual safety of HRT.¹⁶ Several clinical trials were conducted and many of the women who participated ended up with extensive health problems.¹⁷ The NIH's Women's Health Initiative (WHI) clinical trial conducted in July 2002 on HRT therapies became so dangerous that it was halted without being completed, due to HRTs ultimately increasing long-term risk factors for heart attack, stroke and breast cancer for the participants.¹⁸ After that study, further studies were conducted and the results concluded that HRT is associated with increased risks; these studies demonstrated to experts that conventional HRT can worsen the experience of menopause, instead of making it better.¹⁹ The causative elements behind HRT problems are directly related to the massively important role the negative feedback system regulating the hormones play within the body. As a part of the endocrine system hormones are the molecular chemical messengers that travel through the body coordinating all of its complex physiological processes, even influencing the

functions of the immune system, and impacting behavior, so the endocrine system has to stay on point.²⁰ Altering the body by placing additional hormones into the body activates the physiological hormone feedback system which immediately sets out to rectify disrupted hormonal balances.²¹ This feedback management system controls these complex levels with either production of more hormones or suppression of hormone production to ensure that a balance remains, because once disrupted, several disease pathophysiologies can erupt.²² Normally when a certain hormone level drops too low, the body creates more of that hormone to rebalance the level, contrarily if a certain hormone level raises too high, then the body slows production and secretes less of that hormone - this is controlled by feedback stimulation. This feedback system is called HRS-hormone axis suppression.²³ Axis suppression is why long-term HRT treatments negatively impact a woman's health especially during phases of hormonal deficiencies like menopause, because this feedback causes further deficits of the missing hormone by preventing production of that hormone. It also prevents future rectification of the imbalance by instructing the body to cease producing that needed hormone. Over time long-term imbalances like these initiate a negative cascade causing all hormone levels within the endocrine system to be negatively impacted. Women with hormone imbalances are more likely to develop cancer of the uterus, cervix and breast cancer.²⁴ Understanding the importance of the hormones, the feedback system and their correlation to HRT is required because this is where a big problem starts – fighting the natural physiology of the body is unwise.²⁵ Additionally it was found that many doctors were not always checking hormone levels with lab tests before they prescribe HRT – they were prescribing HRT just based on age and assumption that all older women with menopausal symptoms should get HRT.

²⁰ HRT and Endometrial cancer results from the million woman study <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

²⁰ www.webmd.com/menopause/guide/understanding-menopause-treatment

²⁰ www.acupuncture.com/newsletters www.itmonline.org/arts/menopause.htm

²⁰ Menopause treated

www.advancedacupunctureny.com/conditiontreated/menopause

www.empowher.com/holistic-health/content/kidney-yin-deficiency-rest-and-healthy-diet-aid-treatment www.naturdoctor.com

²⁰ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study> www.replens.com/FAB-Blog/Fighting-Vaginal-Dryness/23/Menopause

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²⁰ Cancer causes, prevention and risks associated with hormones

www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/hormones/mht-fact-sheet

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²⁰ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

²⁰ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

²⁰ www.acufinder.com

²⁰ Dunn, K How do Hormones Work? Frontline Fooling with Nature PBS.org www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/nature/etc/hormones/html

²¹ Negative feedback regulation of hormone release in the hypothalamic pituitary axis courses.washington.edu/corj/bess/feedback/newsfeedback.html

²² Negative feedback regulation of hormone release in the hypothalamic pituitary axis courses.washington.edu/corj/bess/feedback/newsfeedback.html

²³ Negative feedback regulation of hormone release in the hypothalamic pituitary axis courses.washington.edu/corj/bess/feedback/newsfeedback.html

²⁴ Copeland, Kristina Diseases Caused by a Hormonal Imbalance Sep 30, 2017 HEALTHY LIVING BLOG healthyliving.azcentral.com/diseases-caused-by-a-hormonal-imbalance-12179897.html

²⁵ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

¹⁴ a brief history of HRT foreverhealth.com/blogs/forever-health/69756997-a-brief-history-of-hormone-replacement-therapy

¹⁵ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

¹⁶ a brief history of HRT foreverhealth.com/blogs/forever-health/69756997-a-brief-history-of-hormone-replacement-therapy

¹⁷ Benefits risks and side effects OF ERT, HRT and NHRT PROJECT AWARE www.projectaware.org/managing/hrt/benefits-risks.shtml www.replens.com/FAB-Blog/Fighting-Vaginal-Dryness/23/Menopause

¹⁸ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

¹⁹ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>



Clinical study stats on HRT²⁶

- Clinical studies revealed that estrogen HRT increased the risk of endometrial cancer – especially for those with uterus intact especially had high risks.²⁷
- Other health problems like urinary incontinence and mental dementia double in occurrence among post menopausal women age 65 years and older using estrogen HRT combined with progestin.²⁸
- Health problems like stroke, blood clots and heart attack which also doubled in occurrence from the use of estrogen HRT and with estrogen and progestin combined.²⁹
- Breast cancer was also very likely to occur in the women who took HRT of estrogen and progestin combined and these estrogens also fueled the breast cancers to become larger in size and spread to the lymph nodes.³⁰
- Lung cancer was also one of the dangerous illnesses that were supercharged by HRT. Women who took combined estrogen and progestin HRT therapy had the same risk of developing lung cancer than the other women but they were more likely to die from the disease.
- Colorectal cancer is also negatively influenced by HRT so that women who took it experienced a more severe type of colorectal cancer –³¹
- This enhanced impact on disease is due to the fact that several cancer types are fueled and empowered by hormones - these cancers become more aggressive than in patients who do not take hormones. This increase in power causes a heightened risk proportionally according to the amount of time the women take the hormones.
- Overall, statistics showed that HRT treatments is negative, the only good news is that the risks of HRT return to normal when women discontinue the use of them.
- After reviewing western style HRT, it is obvious that a safer, more effective option for treating menopause is needed.

TCM Medicine instead

TCM medicine is a safer option for menopause - safer because it uses a holistic approach to helping with menopause and it uses individualized treatments for each woman's specific imbalances, and with TCM the root-cause is also acknowledged and treated. TCM alleviates the root-cause using individualized TCM medicinals, acupuncture and other treatments; this powerful treatment combination of therapies is diagnosed according to the specific syndrome differentiation and diagnosis of each individual woman. Each treatment formulation is different.³² The TCM system allows experts to create personalized treatments for each patient – this is not the case with the conventional approach which groups symptoms then associates them with one type of medicine, this is standardized not individualized and has a lower efficacy and more side-effects.³³

RESULTS

The results are clear in comparing conventional vs. alternative/integrative style treatments for menopause. With menopause, when HRT - Pharmaceutical, chemical and synthetic based hormones were used but this type of replacement was not as effective as TCM system. With, deficient hormones negatively impacted the HRS-hormone axis suppression feedback system TCM promoted regeneration, TCM supplementation and physiological homeostasis which create a better treatment foundation.

Age/period symptoms

Eastern vs western menopause treatments

DISCUSSION

In this graph, these results are significant, TCM clearly stands out as the safer, more-effective treatment system that addresses the root-cause and promotes additional physiological stability with individualized formulations that help alleviate the physical symptoms. So instead of struggling through menopause, maturing women can face menopause armed with natural, scientifically backed, alternative and integrative treatments to help them. Statistics showing that HRT hormone replacement therapy can cause major health problems, syndromes, disease and even cancer, due to side-effects were verified and further imbalances that create neoplastic cellular activity was observed leading directly to cancer which occurred for so many, causing experts and desperate patients to

²⁶ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

²⁷ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

²⁸ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

²⁹ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

³⁰ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

³¹ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

³² www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

³³ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

look out for better options.³⁴ Additionally the scientific perspective of menopause is that is only related to age, hormone health can also be negatively influenced by the environment, regardless of age. Many environmental pathogenic elements are carcinogenic and create epigenetically induced hormonal imbalances forcing women into menopause sooner and causing perimenopausal symptoms for several years prior. Knowing that the environment is potentially contaminated with toxic XENOESTROGENS – even plastic water bottles can pass these chemical hormones into the water we drink is important. Shocking news says that anyone who drinks out of plastic bottles, plastic cups, eats out of plastic containers, or stores food in plastic wrap can be impacted by this, man and women – young and old, but menopausal women feel it more significantly.³⁵ The way xenoestrogens contribute to hormonal imbalances explains the higher incidence of endocrine related health problems, premature menopause and estrogen related breast cancer occurrences in environmentally contaminated countries. The surge in the rising use of plastics and contact with xenoestrogens correlates directly to the occurrence of certain syndromes and disease caused by this toxic-estrogen polluting our environment.³⁶ In the style of TCM diagnosis, the smart TCM specialist will always inquire about the patient's exposure to these poisons in their environment and stay aware of where the patient lives so these strong poisons can be avoided. In fact these toxic xenoestrogens can easily and harmlessly be removed and eradicated from the patient's body and environment with TCM medicinals and plant based treatments. When treated naturally the xeno-toxic estrogens are discharged from the body in the waste excretions. This example shows that the simplicity and convenience of using TCM adds to its efficiency and success in treating hormonal problems.³⁷ So when the question is raised as to "What can be done for hormonal imbalance and menopause?" TCM is the answer – it is better, safer option and most importantly it works without the harsh side-effects or instigation of cancer! Also, with over 5000 years of success treating menopause it is a great choice to help women overcome the condition gracefully. Each TCM treatment formulation is a rich elixir of medicinals combined with additional body treatment elements needed to help the patient fully recover and achieve homeostasis these are some of the important differences between conventional and TCM treatment options for HRT like acupuncture and Tuina. One of the most important factors is that TCM treatments are not hormone based so they do not cause promote more HRS-hormone axis suppression problems – but encourage endocrine health instead.

Conclusion

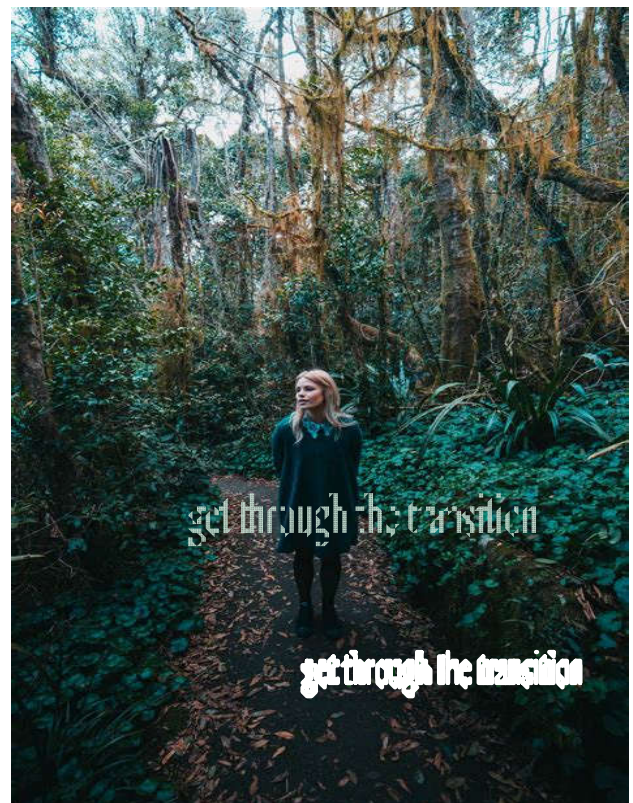
Conclusively, statistics show that TCM is safe, and very effective in helping women through menopause while HRT is still being tested for its dangers. For TCM menopause is an easy health issue to treat with thousands of years experience and a broader, personalized treatment system the TCM way

helps women overcome menopause and hormonal imbalances assisting them through a very rough part of their lives.

MENOPAUSE AND TCM



Even though menopause is unavoidable and riddled with symptoms a smart woman's life can still great if she takes better care of herself and utilizes safer scientifically proven alternatives to support her own health and well-being.³⁸ Watching women suffer when other righteous and smarter alternative and integrative treatments are available – is unfair. TCM needs to be made readily available as an option for all – even in conventional medical facilities.³⁹ In fact, women who seek out help for menopause should automatically be referred to alternative and integrative options like TCM medical experts who can help them with safe, effective and scientifically proven treatments to ease their menopausal symptoms successfully. It is important that alternative and integrative options are exposed, revealed and properly promoted so that these options can be taken advantage by women in all parts of the world. It is further important to educate and promote the use of alternative/integrative treatments that can enhance the success of conventional style HRT - helping to avoid and alleviate the dangerous side effects involved.⁴⁰



³⁴ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

³⁵ <https://www.thoughtco.com/reusing-plastic-bottles-serious-health-hazards-1204028>

³⁶ <https://www.thoughtco.com/reusing-plastic-bottles-serious-health-hazards-1204028>

³⁷ <https://www.thoughtco.com/reusing-plastic-bottles-serious-health-hazards-1204028>

³⁸ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

³⁹ www.tcmpage.com/hpmenopause.html

⁴⁰ <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-us/cancer-news/press-release/hrt-and-endometrial-cancer-results-from-the-million-women-study>

Resources

Clinical test results on HRT

Studies done

UK cancer research – The million women study

The Million Women Study was a study done by the UK Cancer Research Team; the results of this study did prove that certain forms of HRT actually do increase the risk of endometrial cancer. Further research showed that using a combination of chemical hormones for HRT created a greater risk for developing breast cancer than if just using estradiol only. This study was conducted using oral estradiol instead of transdermal estradiol which helped avoid risks. The study showed that a combination of estrogen patch gel that contains both 17 β -estradiol and micronized progesterone was the best treatment approach. The results of the study stated that Breast cancer was more common in occurrence than endometrial cancer - so researchers recommend each patient looks at the risks for both breast and endometrial cancer first before getting the treatment.

Study 2

The World Health Initiative Study

The World Health Initiative Study was a research study done in 2002, the study monitored the health of 27,347 postmenopausal women while they were in the two HRT randomized trials and in the years after. This study is important because the findings of the study shattered the general held belief that hormone replacement therapy can protect women from heart disease and other chronic illnesses. Instead of proving the benefits of HRT, the Women's Health Initiative study found that taking estrogen plus progestin HRT hormone replacement therapy actually increases the woman's risk of developing heart disease and breast cancer. The results of this study had such a huge effect on the public opinion that within months the number of women using HRT dropped by almost half. There was also a second Women's Health Initiative study published two years later and it reinforced that same findings of the first study and perpetuated the opinion of the dangers involved. New information found that taking estrogen by itself also increases the risk of stroke, dementia and other problems. Over the years with these massive studies being done, and hearing the conclusions - women and doctors are still in a confusion over what to do in concerns to HRT – should they use them or not and if they use them at what age is it appropriate to do so and in what combination.

Study 3 - The WHI study

So the Women's Health Initiative published a final comprehensive report on all studies which was published in Jama. Studies and statistics on HRT. For this study 27,000 women 50-79 years old were given either a combination of estrogen and progestin or just estrogen alone. The study treated patients with hormonal imbalances and used either a Combination treatment of either estrogen plus progestin, or they used a individual treatment of estrogen alone then studied the impact of using them on women with menopause. What the researchers discovered from the study was “the truth” of what occurs with hormonal replacement.

The research showed that there will be serious problems, side-effects and even fatal problems associated with hormone replacement therapy. Unfortunately without estrogen replacement - there may be bone loss and several serious related symptoms in women. All negative health symptoms that are occurring are as a result of declining hormone levels of estrogen/progesterone – but just giving more of the hormone in its synthetic form is not the answer – But an answer is needed. The key point was that they realized that they need to organize groups according to age and the amount of time that had passed since menopause. This information is what women and their doctors need to help them interpret what will benefit patients. Their final recommendation is that patients should not use hormones for chronic disease prevention, but that younger women can use the treatment for symptoms that are moderate to severe involving menopause. It turns out that age difference is relevant because younger women are less likely to have adverse side-effects occur, like heart attacks, blood clots, and stroke. Both trials were abruptly stopped early in 2002 and 2004 - because the results of the study were so alarming and dangerous that it became obvious that all HRT treatments are associated with Developing major health risks and put the study participants at risk.

Study 4 - Stanford studies on Accupuncture as a treatment for menopause

An important study was done in 2007 by the Stanford University School of Medicine. This study showed that acupuncture significantly reduced the intensity of the symptoms of nighttime hot flashes in menopausal women. The study design was to focus primarily on the symptoms of women who had already completed menopause. In the study, 29 postmenopausal women who were experiencing the minimum of seven hot flashes per day were given TCM acupuncture treatments. The impact of the acupuncture given was significant and the reported intensity of the hot flashes decreased in the group that received acupuncture by (28%). While the placebo group that did not receive authentic acupuncture only experienced a (6%) decrease in the frequency of the hot flashes they experienced.

TCM menopause formula information

LIU Wei Di Huang wan formula

Shi di huang

Shan zu yu

Shan yao

Ze xie

Mu Dan pi

Fu ling

Actions of this formula - This is a real TCM formula that is used because it enriches and nourishes the yin aspects of the kidney and the liver to solve the symptoms related to menopause.