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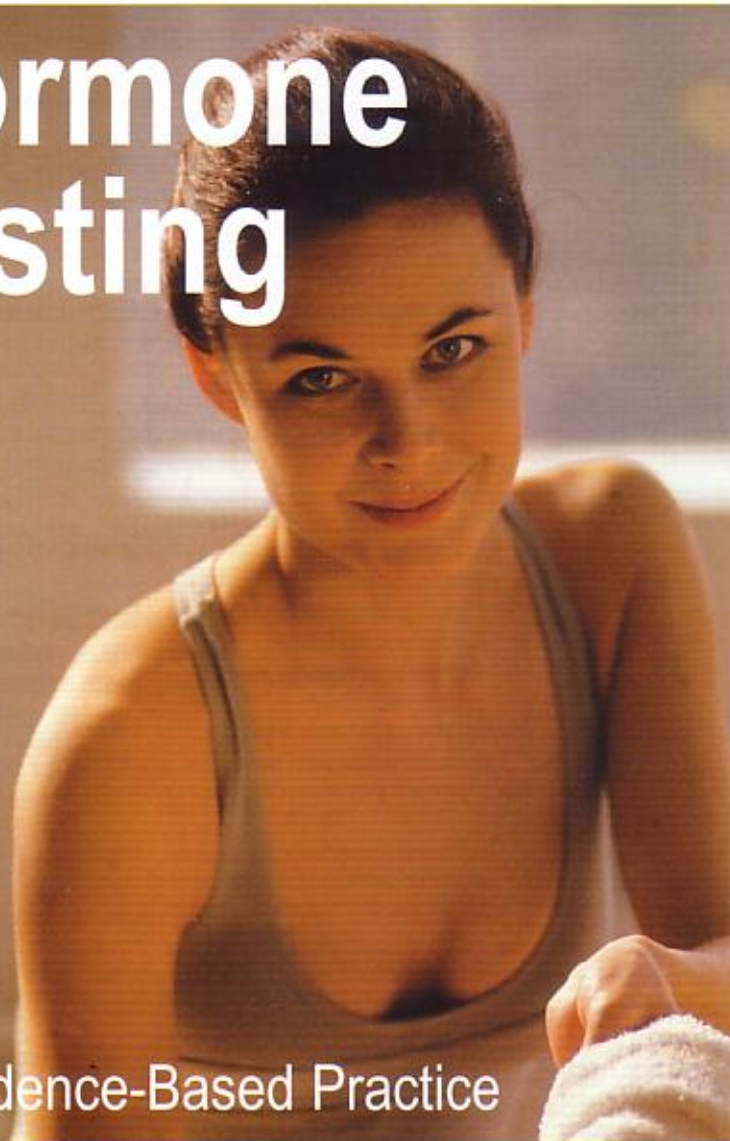
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The Essential Trade Journal for Today's Therapist

Hormone Testing

for Evidence-Based Practice



Hormones are a complex area of health encompassing physical, mental and emotional aspects and is an ideal example of a window on holism. It is also for that very reason that the average MD finds the hormonal aspect of health so difficult to deal with, for women especially, usually resorting to prescriptions of the Pill or HRT (depending on a woman's age), anti-depressants or even surgery to remove the 'offending' organ!

Saliva assays are the most accurate and even the most effective way of obtaining sound information to guide you in your practice to achieve measurable results. (One of the perceived 'problems' with CAM therapies, according to the medically-minded, is that there's little objective testing or evaluation of results as outcome and is entirely based on empiricism and subjective feedback from the patient. Medics will also cite that patients can be willing to provide feedback to please their practitioner!)

So what are the advantages of saliva testing vs. blood serum testing?

- Saliva shows the free, unbound and bio-available fraction of steroid hormones in the blood stream unlike blood and urine, which

measure total levels, and include the unavailable fraction;

- Saliva is the most reliable way of measuring the uptake of transdermally applied hormones;
- It's painless, non-invasive, simple and needle-free (the stress of a conventional blood draw can alter results) as well as private. Samples are collected by the patient at home and mailed back to the lab;
- Hormones collected in saliva are stable at room temperature for weeks, which means that no special handling or transportation is required.

What does it mean in terms of clinical practice?

Clinical-quality results plus reporting that is clear

and explanatory help therapists plan comprehensive and successful strategies. Here are some case histories that you can probably relate to ...

Theresa

History: Theresa is 42 years old and had a hysterectomy (ovaries intact) last year because she had uterine fibroids. She visited her doctor because she was experiencing hot flushes, her doctor told her that this was impossible as she still had her ovaries but offers her anti-depressants for the depression she mentions, which she declines. She also mentions that she is fatigued, her allergies are worse, has vaginal dryness, feels cold all the time, has foggy thinking and really can't get going in the mornings.

Saliva Test Interpretation of Results:

Theresa has low estradiol, progesterone and testosterone which are suggestive of ovarian failure. (This is common after removal of the uterus although this is not officially recognised by the medical profession.) Oestrogen deficiency can be related to vaginal dryness, memory lapses, hot flushes and incontinence. Low testosterone can be associated with decreased libido, decreased enjoyment of life and vaginal dryness. Fatigue and worsening allergies may be consistent with failure to elevate morning cortisol and impaired adrenal function is common after stressors such as surgery. Healthy cortisol is necessary for proper action of thyroid hormones and low cortisol can present with symptoms of hypothyroidism despite any 'normal' thyroid tests that may have been done previously.

Recommendations: This case illustrates very well how hormones and symptoms can be typical of many women's experience. Even though Theresa is still a young woman she has the hormone profile of a postmenopausal woman and is at risk for osteoporosis. She needs a two-pronged strategy that addresses the ovarian failure and supports her adrenal function. Theresa can work with you on supplementing her oestrogens through, perhaps, the incorporation of phytoestrogens and she can supplement with natural progesterone. Natural progesterone is a pre-cursor of many of the hormones and will help to restore balance in an holistic way, supporting the ovarian hormones as well as the adrenal hormones and helping to prevent osteoporosis by feeding the osteoblast's (bone-building cells) progesterone receptors. Restoring balance should have enormous knock-on benefits to Theresa's wellbeing both in the short term and long term.

Susan

History: Susan is 52 and is about 3 stone overweight. She hasn't had a period in two years and didn't experience any obvious menopause symptoms. She has a history of fibrocystic (lumpy) breasts and her mother had uterine cancer. She admits to eating a lot of chicken and dairy is also a major part of her diet. Susan complains of fatigue, constipation, the weight gain that she's unable to do anything about and her thinning hair. **Saliva Test Interpretation of**

Results: Susan's estradiol is higher than would be expected for a postmenopausal woman and because her progesterone is also low it would explain symptoms such as breast tenderness and lumpiness, fluid retention, headaches and irritability. For Susan, the high oestrogen may also be acting to inhibit thyroid function. Symptoms of hypothyroid include fatigue, feeling cold all the time, thinning hair and constipation, for example.

Recommendations: Susan's 'sail' through menopause was probably as a result of the weight that she'd gained. Oestrogen is made from excess body fat and also the oestrogen content of her diet (high in dairy and chicken). The excess of oestrogen can be managed by the use of natural progesterone to help to balance it out and thereby also improve thyroid function. Natural progesterone should also reduce her risk of developing uterine cancer. By improving Susan's thyroid function it should also help her to lose weight too! With further

recommendations that she should increase her fibre intake, and reduce her dairy and chicken intake and substitute any she does have with organic where possible, it will also help to reduce her oestrogen load.

These two women's case histories give a good impression about the wide and profound impact hormone imbalance can have on life and living. Having an accurate assessment upon which to work builds a confidence between you and your client that improves outcomes and the success of your practice! TT

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