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Hormone Health and a Clinical Tool That Promotes an Holistic Approach

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Hormones are a controversial subject that causes angst and confusion for women (in particular, but not exclusively) and pressure for solutions on doctors in general practice, gynaecology, endocrinology, psychiatry, psychology, oncology and even gerontology!

Confused about how many medical specialties can be involved with trying to resolve

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hormone problems?

Hormones are not just restricted to the endocrine specialty of medicine. The physical, mental and emotional symptoms of hormone imbalance often find their way to the doors of CAM practitioners for help when medicine has failed or when people want more natural solutions.

Let's look at a tiny fraction of the evidence of their diversity of effect:

- Anxiety disorders can and do have a basis in hormonal imbalance as do depression and migraine, Archives of Internal Medicine (October, 2006).
- A link has been established between HRT (specifically synthetic oestrogen) and Alzheimer's Disease, Journal of Endocrinology (October, 2006). Whilst another shows hearing loss (September, 2006 Endocrinology News) as a recognised side effect of HRT.
- Stress hormones play a central role in the development and progression of Alzheimer's, Journal of Neuroscience (August 2006).
- Meanwhile, researchers in Oregon, USA (at the 36th annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, October, 2006), report that there *is* a link between the sex hormones and emotions.

Finally, I have to admit to being deeply saddened by the publication of another study in the October issue of the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry; researchers are recommending that women with moderate-to-severe PMS should be prescribed with low dose anti-depressants. (PMS is an aspect of hormonal imbalance.)

The important thing to remember is that synthetic hormones do not balance hormones, they cause more imbalance and anti-depressants merely mask symptoms. The tragedy of this story is that women are being affected in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and even into their 60s. These types of health problems are not merely the result of a deficiency or an excess of one particular hormone. There are many factors that contribute to disease but, where hormonal involvement is suspected, imbalances can be a great place to start because they can also have a major impact on the person's experience of a health problem too.

Hormonal imbalances can be deceptive because they can give mixed messages, they can be inhibited by nutritional deficiencies or environmental toxins and they can be blocked from a cell receptor that is occupied; by cortisol, for example. These types of problems are not just limited to the obvious sex hormone connections either. Inflammatory Bowel Disease can induce high levels of cortisol and lead to symptoms of oestrogen dominance: tender breasts, water retention, bloating and mood swings amongst other things, which only add to the stress of the condition.

Hormone testing may not be a new concept to some of you, whilst others may be worried that they will actu-

ally find results useful enough in their work or, even whether they will be able to interpret them. Well, you don't need to be. If you get full reporting that includes the correlation of specific symptoms with lab results you can start to build an important picture and an objective context of the health problem, which can be acutely satisfying as you can be confident that these are not only addressing individual, and groups of, symptoms, but also underlying causes.

Are these tests accurate enough? You can be sure they are clinical quality and approved by the World Health Organisation ...

Saliva and blood spot testing are non or minimally invasive which opens testing up to anyone, and there is no need for a phlebotomist or the need to rush samples by courier to a processing lab. (Samples are provided in the privacy of your client's own home - no impact on your insurance!)

Testing of bio-available, or 'free', hormones allows for much more accurate and relevant reporting. Generally, less than 5% of our hormones are active and available to the body to use. If you are measuring total amounts, as in serum testing, any small discrepancy is going to be deemed clinically insignificant but if you are measuring the free element of the hormone you can have a much more accurate picture.

Detailed questionnaires about symptoms allow a real correlation between results and the individual. This is invaluable information for any doctor, practitioner or lay person to be able to see how laboratory results fit into the context of the person being tested, informing the compilation of a personalised natural approach to hormone balancing by any CAM practitioner.

It has been shown that having objective testing as part of your clinical practice it will improve understanding, confidence in your practice, client compliance and ultimately the outcomes!

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Bio Vitality has a CMA CPD Approved Hormone Masterclass for CAM practitioners, which includes your own hormone testing.

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