HAS ESTROGEN DEPRIVATION INCREASED MORTALITY FROM CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE IN MENOPAUSAL WOMEN?

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This presentation explores the multi-faceted controversy surrounding hormone replacement therapy (HRT), particularly estrogen therapy (ET). The results of the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) study were disseminated prematurely and over-dramatized in the lay press. Consequently, HRT and ET use declined considerably. Although the WHI study was conducted in asymptomatic older women (mean age 63 years) and only equine estrogens were used, the results were extrapolated to all women and all estrogens. Numerous secondary analyses have been conducted and sub-groups reviewed, with results supporting one group or another. Ten years after the initial publication of the WHI study, Sarrel et al. evaluated the effect of estrogen avoidance in younger, hysterectomized women of 50-59 years of age using a mathematical model applied to women from the WHI study. In that population, ET was associated with a significant reduction in all-cause mortality. Acceptance of these findings should result in an immediate change in practice, motivating practitioners to discuss the possibility of ET with these women. Criticism to Sarrel's work includes challenges to the model and data from studies other than the WHI study. This session will address multiple aspects of this controversy, particularly emphasizing its implications in emerging countries with basic health issues.