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One of the Largest Post-WHI Physician Surveys Shows More Education is Needed: Patient Misinformation about Hormone Therapy Remains High

Survey Reveals Five Ways a Woman can Work With Her Doctor to Manage Menopausal Symptoms

Washington, D.C. (September 5, 2007)– Results from one of the largest national surveys of doctors involved in menopause care conducted since the release of initial findings from the Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) leave no doubt – even five years later, a cloud of confusion lingers for both physicians and patients regarding the results of the WHI study. The online survey of over 400 physicians concludes that patients remain confused about the risks of hormone therapy (HT); in fact, only 15% of doctors believe their patients accurately perceive the risks of HT. The survey was conducted by Richard Day Research on behalf of The Hormone Foundation, with the support of Novogyne Pharmaceuticals.

Amongst the key findings of the survey is that only 18 percent of physicians have “no confusion at all” about the WHI findings. However, physicians feel the confusion that exists among the general public is much greater:

- 93% feel the level of misinformation patients bring to their office about the WHI findings has “somewhat” or “very much” affected their practice
- More than two-thirds feel their patients and the media have “a great deal of confusion” now about the WHI findings
- 83% of doctors report their patients are as or more confused now than when the findings were first released in 2002
- 81% of doctors believe the media are as or more confused now than when the findings were first released

“Since the results of the WHI were first released in 2002, the public has been bombarded with conflicting information on how to interpret the findings,” said Paula Correa, MA, Director of The Hormone Foundation. “The results of this survey underscore the importance of physicians’ role in educating patients and calls for more public education on menopause management. This is a complex issue and patients should participate in a continuous open dialogue with their physicians to arrive at treatment decisions best for their individual needs.”

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Physicians make treatment decisions based on information shared by their patients. The survey revealed that 100 percent of physicians say the severity of their patients' symptoms is "somewhat" or "very important" to them when deciding whether to prescribe HT, closely followed by the range and specific types of symptoms (97 percent) and patient requests (94 percent).

Doctors were also asked to choose from a list of valuable tips to help their patients manage menopause. The following were the top five selections:

- #1: Document and prioritize their symptoms, including how often they have symptoms and how severe they are.
- #2: Think through your own risk/benefit comfort level prior to a consultation
- #3: Come to the physician's office with a list of questions prepared
- #4: Learn about HT in general ahead of time
- #5: Document your family health history

"In some ways, the complexity of the WHI has been a blessing in disguise," said menopause expert Nanette Santoro, MD, Professor and Director of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine's Division of Reproductive Endocrinology in New York and member of The Hormone Foundation's Women's Health Task Force. "Physicians are spending more time than ever discussing the risks and benefits of HT with their patients and are focused on individualizing the HT regimen to the specific needs of the patient. This can include adjusting the amount of the dose, the ingredients and the route of administration."

The survey showed that for the treatment of moderate to severe menopause symptoms, 74 percent of physicians still think of HT as a first line treatment. In addition, the survey identified that physicians are considering HT options outside of the traditional pill formulations more often: in the last two years, 43 percent of physicians have prescribed non-oral HT "somewhat" or "a lot more often" for their patients, with 71 percent saying their patients preferred the transdermal patch over other non-oral options.

The survey also dug deeper into how the WHI findings have affected menopause management practices in several different areas including:

- How physicians from different specialties, who self-identify as menopause specialists, understand the WHI and view the risks and benefits of HT differently than those who do not
- When, for how long and what type of HT to prescribe
- Referral rates to physicians more experienced in menopause management
- What information they discuss with patients and in what detail
- Information needs and educational tools desired for themselves and their patients

To view the full survey responses, please visit www.hormone.org/meno_physician_survey.htm. To arrange an interview with a menopause expert regarding the survey findings, please contact Lisa Mozloom at 305-573-9955, lmzloom@golinharris.com for interview coordination.

About the Survey

The results of this study are based on a survey of 404 physicians who are involved in menopause management, including the following primary medical specialties: endocrinologists, obstetrician/gynecologists, internal medicine, family or general practitioners. The maximum margin of error (at the 95 percent confidence level) for a sample of 404, assuming no bias, is +/- 5 percent. The survey was conducted between April 16 and May 23, 2007, by Richard Day Research of Evanston, IL. Physicians completed the survey online. Physicians were drawn from a national list of physicians involved in menopause care and Endocrine Society members. Final data were weighted to reflect the population of all physicians involved in menopause care.

To qualify for the survey, a physician had to devote at least 70% of their working day to clinical practice, see at least two patients with menopausal symptoms in a typical month and treat patients for at least six years post-residency or fellowship.

About The Hormone Foundation

The Hormone Foundation, the public education affiliate of The Endocrine Society, is a leading source of hormone-related health information for the public, physicians, allied health professionals and the media. Its mission is to serve as a resource for the public by promoting the prevention, treatment and cure of hormone-related conditions through outreach and education. For more information about The Hormone Foundation, please visit www.hormone.org.

About Novogyne Pharmaceuticals

Novogyne Pharmaceuticals is a joint venture between Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation of East Hanover, New Jersey, and Noven Pharmaceuticals, Inc. of Miami, Florida. Since May 1998, Novogyne has been offering pharmaceutical products that enable physicians to better serve the medical needs of mature women. Novogyne was the first company in the U.S. offering transdermal systems for both the estrogen-only and combination estrogen/progestin markets. For more information about Novogyne Pharmaceuticals and its products, please visit www.novogyne.com.

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