

Artigo de Opinião/Opinion Article

When a dream becomes true...

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I once felt that there should be sometimes wrong about the noise that had been generated by the release of the results of the Women's Health Initiative Study.

I read it again and again and, much to my astonishment, my interpretation of the announced results did not match with what had been divulged. Therefore I decided to publish my own conclusions¹ that clearly indicated that women under 60 years of age, with vasomotor symptoms, were not at risk of cardiovascular diseases while being treated with estrogens+progestins. The NIH/WHI investigators had concluded otherwise saying that *"the findings applied to all women, regardless of age or health status"*².

Furthermore, although I did understand that the design of such a clinical trial required that all women had to take the same dose of the tested medication, as a clinician I could not accept that older women were medicated with doses that were much higher than what their age required. Obviously this resulted in a large number of drop outs due to side effects (uterine bleeding, etc).

Consequently the WHI results could not be extrapolated into good clinical practice as pretended by the WHI investigators.

There should be something wrong... Among those who participated in the WHI Study there were no doubt many good clinicians who could not apply those data in their daily practice of menopause care givers!...

It was then that one night I had a *"dream"* that I shared with the readers of Climacteric³. I imagined that one day would come when the WHI investigators would apologize to the women, all over the World, for the damage they had caused with their wrong advises. I imagined that a message was being sent, through the news agencies, by many physicians to women all over the world : *"We, the physicians who participated in a widely publicized study, known as the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) deeply regret that our results were so severely misinterpreted by the media and also by a large segment of the medical profession"... "As investigators of that study we did our best to accurately report the findings. However, as physicians, we feel a collective responsibility to explain to all women and doctors what these results meant in order to avoid the ongoing misinterpretations"... "As physicians we feel an ethical and social responsibility to tell the people, beyond our frontiers, wherever those results have reached, that women should not be unduly alarmed"."* Signed by the physicians who participated in the WHI". This was my dream...

It is now my great pleasure to see that it seems that my dream is coming through. It took 4 years since my own interpretation of the WHI¹ until the WHI was submitted to several reanalysis⁴ that confirmed what I had already concluded: women in the early menopause were protected from CVD!⁵

During the WHI press conference in 2002 one investigator said the following *"The Nurse's Study and one like it could be right and the Women's Health*

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Initiative could be wrong, or vice-versa". "If each is right may be because the women in the two types of studies are different in a way that researchers have not yet figured out" ⁶.

This was probably his wise premonition of what the WHI was and what the WHI was not... How right he was and how much he has certainly suffered over the years...

The truth off the matter always comes to the surface as the years go by... In a recent article ³ of The Wall Street Journal (July 9) that above mentioned investigator, Jacques Rossouw, was quoted as having said: "some investigators were upset that they weren't included in writing the first report. That was an NIH decision supported by the WHI executive committee..." and adds that "study officials wanted to make a dramatic statement"...

"To publish data that may or may not be entirely true, or certainly premature, is a disservice to the medical profession and, most important, to our patients" ⁷

It is unbelievable that such an important and authoritative department of the US government, the National Institutes of Health", may have antidemocratically shut the mouth of the scientists who did the study and has lied to the women and the physicians of the World... Their political concerns were far more important before the American tax payers that ought to be reassured that their money had been well spent!

Unbelievable, but unfortunately very true!

Many remaining mysteries will certainly be unveiled in the near future, like why was the estrogen only arm of the WHI suspended? Certainly not because of the risk of stroke...It would seem that if one extra case of breast cancer had been detected in the control group the conclusion would be statistically very significant in that estrogens alone did protect from breast cancer! Who did benefit from that?... Not the women, for sure. An immediate consequence was an early suspension of the Wisdom Study⁸. The follow up of the women that had meanwhile been recruited was recently published ⁹ confirming that hormonal treatments soon after the menopause protect from cardiovascular diseases .

I want to take this opportunity, when I am awaking from my dream, to pay tribute to those who had, long

before, foreseen the truth, like Tom Clarkson with his experiments in monkeys ¹⁰: time of initiation of the hormonal treatment is of capital importance as confirmed recently ¹¹.

I presume that there are still many who remember a meeting of the North American Menopause Society during which Clarkson presented again his outstanding conclusions. It was a session not to be forgotten when many pseudo-scientists attacked him almost to the point of being offensive...

Nietzsche once said that "*convictions are more enemies of the truth than lies*" and somebody else also said that "*the mind is like a parachute: they both work better when they open*".

In a recent lecture Leon Speroff said that "*the future of hormone therapy requires prepared minds. Let us not suffer from an insufficient number of prepared minds.*"

Let us hope that the American tax payers will now force the WHI to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help them God!

We have tried, two years ago, to confront american WHI investigators with some European leaders of opinion in a Symposium published in Maturitas ¹². Unfortunately much to everybody's surprise only one WHI investigator refused to send his text for publication although it is available in a DVD recorded during the sessions. Why? Who knows?

The time has come to move forwards ^{13,14,15} as stipulated by many authoritative scientific associations IMS ^{16,17,18,19}, EMAS ²⁰, NAMS ²¹: there should not be a limit for a well medicated hormone treatment if there are no upcoming contraindications and if its objectives are fulfilled.

It takes but a few wrong statements to cause a *tsunami* of panic. It takes years to correct the disaster and give back a good quality of life to the women of the World.

Preventing a woman from the benefits of a sound postmenopausal hormone therapy because of the fear of rare side effects does not seem to be a satisfactory Medicine ¹.

When the 2nd World War ended, Sir Winston Churchill said in the House of Commons what is also applicable to the ongoing discussions about the

hormonal treatments for the menopause: “*This is not the end, nor even the beginning of the end. It is, perhaps, the end of the beginning*”.

It seems that “My dream” was nothing but a premonition ...

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