Genital Atrophy Common, Rapid After HT Stopped

BY MICHELE G. SULLIVAN

Mid-Atlantic Bureau

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W.VA. Within just 6-12 months of discontinuing hormone therapy, more than 96% of postmenopausal women will show altered vaginal pH, a marker for tissue change and its associated genital atrophy, Murray Freedman, M.D., reported.

Only 10 of 300 women maintained a normal vaginal pH of 4.5 or less after discontinuing HT use, and seven of those women had elevated serum estradiol levels related to obesity-driven estrogen production, said Dr. Freedman, clinical professor of ob.gyn at the Medical College of Georgia, Augusta.

The rest of the women had both elevated vaginal pH and decreased serum estradiol. The most common clinical finding in the study was involution of the vulvar structures and a rapidly occurring introital stenosis, which correlated with frequent complaints of dyspareunia, he noted at the annual meeting of the South Atlantic Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

Because the onset of genital atrophy is insidious and its measurement subjective, the number who experienced it was "hard to quantify," Dr. Freedman told this newspaper. "There is no real measurement for it. But for many of these women, the stenosis became noticeable within 6-12 months.'

His observations led him to conclude

that the dyspareunia many postmenopausal women experience has more to do with introital stenosis than vaginal dryness. "The dryness was secondary to the stenosis and the involution of the distal vagina. Once you got past the introitus, the upper vagina was uncompromised."

His prospective observational study evaluated 300 women who had discontinued HT after publication of the initial Women's Health Initiative results in July 2002. All women underwent a pelvic exam and had their vaginal pH tested within 12 months of therapy discontinuation (most within 6 months). Those with a normal vaginal pH level (4.5 or below) had their serum estradiol level evaluated.

The vast majority of the women (290) had a pH level of more than 4.5. Only 10 maintained a normal vaginal pH. Three of those women had serum estradiol of less than 20 pcg/mL, consistent with postmenopausal status.

The other seven had normal circulating estradiol levels. One of these was a 50year-old woman with her uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries intact, who had been placed on HT for menopausal symptoms. The other six women were older (57-76 years) and either overweight or obese.

In addition to observing introital stenosis, he also noted that the urethral meatus became more prominent in many women, assuming almost a tubular form and expanding to constitute up to two-thirds of the introitus. This is not surprising, he said, because the urethra and trigone are just as heavily endowed with estrogen receptors as are the lower vagina and vulva and just as susceptible to involutional change with estrogen deficiency.

"Embryologically, the vulva, distal vagina, trigone, and urethra are all derived from the urogenital sinus and contain the highest concentration of estrogen receptors. The upper vagina is actually a downgrowth of the müllerian system" and so less susceptible to change associated with estrogen depletion.

Because genital atrophy is so widespread and rapid after menopause in the absence of HT, women should be proactively counseled about how to maintain good genital health, Dr. Freedman said. If the decision is made to discontinue HT, topical estrogen can prevent genital atrophy and, if administered within the first year of estrogen cessation, can even reverse some changes.

Coitus at least once a week helps maintain tissue integrity by dilation and increased genital blood flow. "It's a use-it-or-lose-it phenomenon," he said. "In the absence of both estrogen and sexual activity, the rapidity of involution is compounded."

Women without a male partner can be counseled to use topical estrogen and a vibrator or vaginal dilator, and to become orgasmic, periodically. "This will maintain a normal, healthy vagina," he said.

But most physicians—especially males never broach the subject of sexuality with their postmenopausal patients. "To those men, I would put this question: 'At what age would you like your genitalia to begin shrinking?" Dr. Freedman said. "I bet it wouldn't be 51, which is the average age of menopause in this country."

References: 1. Data on file, Sanofi-Synthelabo Inc. 2. IMS Health, National Prescription Audit Plus, MAT May 2004.



BRIEF SUMMARY

INDICATIONS AND USAGE

contraindications

Be known.

WARNINGS

Be alsep disturbances may be the presenting manifestation of a physical for psychiatric disorder, symptomatic treatment of insomnia should be initionly after a careful evaluation of the patient. The failure of insomnia to remit 7 to 10 days of treatment may indicate the presence of a primary psychiatric for medical illness which should be evaluated. Worsening of insomnia or the regence of new thinking or behavior abnormalities may be the consequence numeroognized syschiatric or physical disorder. Such findings have emerged ng the course of treatment with sedative/hypnotic drugs, including Ambien. Susses some of the important adverse effects of Ambien appear to be dose led (see Precautions and Dosage and Administration), it is important to use smallest possible effective dose, especially in the elderly. Variety of abnormal thinking and behavior changes have been reported to ur in association with the use of sedative/hypnotics. Some of these changes be characterized by decreased inhibition (eg. aggressiveness and extroverthat seemed out of characterly, similar to effects produced by alcohol and ur CNS depressants. Other reported behavioral changes have included re behavior, alpitation, hallucinations, and depersonalization. Annesia and ar neuropsychiatric symptoms may occur unpredictably. In primarily ressed patients, worsening of depression, induding suicidal thinking, has in reported in association with the use of sedative/hypnotics.

It of an underlying psychiatric or physical disorder. Nonetheless, the emerae of any new behavioral sign or symptom of concern requires careful and redictate evaluation.

with withdrawal from other CNS-depressant drugs (see Drug Abuse and endence),
mblen, like other sedative/hypnotic drugs, has CNS-depressant effects. Due
te rapid onset of action, Ambien should only be ingested immediately prior
oing to bed. Patients should be cautioned against engaging in hazardous
pations requiring complete mental alertness or motor coordination such asating machinery or driving a motor vehicle after ingesting the drug, includobtential impairment of the performance of such activities that may occur the
following ingestion of Ambien. Ambien showed additive effects when comd with alcohol and should not be taken with alcohol. Patients should also be
ioned about possible combined effects with other CNS-depressant drugs.
age adjustments may be necessary when Ambien is administered with such
tts because of the potentially additive effects.

Information for patients: Patient information is printed in the complete prescrib-ng information.

atory tests: There are no specific laboratory tests recommended.

Laboratory tests: Inere are no specinic laboratory tests recommended. Drug interactions CMS-active drugs: Ambien was evaluated in healthy volunteers in single-dose interaction studies for several CNS drugs. A study involving haloperidol and zolpidem revealed no effect of haloperidol on the pharmacokinetics or pharma-codynamics of zolpidem. Imipramine in combination with zolpidem produced no pharmacokinetic interaction other than a 20% decrease in peak levels of imipramine, but there was an additive effect of decreased alertness. Similarly, chlorpromazine in combination with zolpidem produced no pharmacokinetic interaction, but there was an additive effect of decreased alertness and psy-chomotor performance. The lack of a drug interaction following single-dose administration does not predict a lack following chronic administration. An additive effect on psychomotor performance between alcohol and zolpi-dem was demonstrated.

Mutagenesis: Zolpidem did not have mutagenic activity in several tests including the Ames test, genotoxicity in mouse lymphoma cells in vitro, chromosomal
aberrations in cultured human lymphocytes, unscheduled DNA synthesis in rat
hepatocytes in vitro, and the micronucleus test in mice.

Impairment of fertilfrity: In a rat reproduction study, the high dose (100 mg
base/kg) of zolpidem resulted in irregular estrus cycles and prolonged precoital
intervals, but there was no effect on male or female fertility after daily oral doses
of 4 to 100 mg base/kg or 5 to 130 times the recommended human dose in
mg/m². No effects on any other fertility parameters were noted.

Labor and delivery: Ambien has no established use in labor and deliver

Nursing mothers: Studies in lactating mothers indicate that between 0.004 and 0.019% of the total administered dose is excreted into milk, but the effect of zolpidem on the infant is unknown.

The use of Ambien in nursing mothers is not recommended.

Pediatric use: Safety and effectiveness in pediatric patients below the age of 18 have not been established.

have not been established.

Geriatric use: A total of 154 patients in U.S. controlled clinical trials and 897 patients in non-U.S. clinical trials who received zolpidem were ≥60 years of age. For a pool of U.S. patients receiving zolpidem at doses of ≤10 mg or placebo, there were three adverse events occurring at an incidence of at least 3% for zolpidem and for which the zolpidem incidence was at least twice the placebo incidence (ie, they could be considered drug related).

Adverse Event	Zolpidem	Placebo
Dizziness	3%	0%
Drowsiness	5%	2%
Diarrhea	3%	1%

DRUG ABUSE AND DEPENDENCE

Controlled substance: Schedule IV.

Abuse and dependence: Studies of abuse potential in former drug abusers found that the effects of single doses of zolpidem tartrate 40 mg were similar, but not identical, to diazepam 20 mg, while zolpidem tartrate 10 mg was difficult to distinguish from placebo.

Sedative/hypnotics have produced withdrawal signs and symptoms following abrupt discontinuation. These reported symptoms range from mild dysphoria and insomnia to a withdrawal syndrome that may include abdominal and muscle cramps, vomiting, sweating, tremors, and convulsions. The U.S. clinical trial experience from zolpidem doses not reveal any dear evidence for withdrawal syndrome. Nevertheless, the following adverse events included in DSM-III- toriar for uncomplicated sedative/hypnotic withdrawal were reported at an incidence of ≤1% during U.S. clinical trials following placebo substitution occurring within 48 hours following last zolpidem treatment: fatigue, nausea, flushing, lightheadedness, uncontrolled crying, emesis, stomach cramps, panic attack, nervousness, and abdominal discomfort. Rare post-marketing reports of abuse, dependence and withdrawal have been received.

Individuals with a history of addiction to, or abuse of, drugs or alcohol are at increased risk of habituation and dependence; they should be under careful surveillance when receiving any typnotic.

OVERDOSAGE

symptomatology, including fatal outcomes.

Recommended treatment: General symptomatic and supportive measures should be used along with immediate gastric lavage where appropriate. Intravenous fluids should be administered as needed. Flumazenil may be useful. Respiration, pulse, blood pressure, and other appropriate signs should be monitored and general supportive measures employed. Sedating drugs should be withheld following zolpidem overdosage. Zolpidem is not dialyzable.

The possibility of multiple drug ingestion should be considered.

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