

Testimony Before the Advisory Committee
for Reproductive Health Drugs Hearing On “Intrinsa”
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My name is Lenore M. Pomerance. I am a psychotherapist in Washington, D.C. and work with mid-life women and their partners menopause, sexual relationships, and healthy lifestyles.

The approval of Intrinsa is premature until long-term data have proven its safety. What short memories some of us have! Twenty-eight months ago The Women’s Health Initiative halted its unprecedented trial of estrogen and progestin because risks outweighed the benefits for post-menopausal women.

That study was undertaken to test whether the estrogen preparations that **millions of women had already been taking for over thirty years** helped or harmed them. If we knew then what we know now, would we have let doctors and drug companies convince us that menopause was a disease? Would we have let ourselves be fooled into believing Dr. Robert Wilson

who claimed in his book, "Feminine Forever" that "menopause is a hormone deficiency disease, curable and totally preventable, and that every woman, no matter what her age, can safely live a fully-sexed life for her entire life?" The cure for this disease was "Hormone Replacement Therapy" - replacing what had been lost. And those thirty years saw efforts to make HRT reverse the ravages of old age from wrinkled skin and weak hearts, to addled brains. The results of the WHI have taken the "R" out of "HRT." Researchers and practitioners don't talk of "replacement" anymore. The new term is "HT" and it is to be used only for menopausal symptoms of hot flashes and vaginal dryness for the shortest time and in the lowest dose possible. The new guidelines are not based proven safety but on women's willingness to live with the risks.

Getting rid of the "R" is a backhanded way of admitting that menopause is a natural condition, a physiological process that every woman will experience if she lives long enough. Many women are never bothered by the physiological changes. Some even welcome them. In my practice, women for whom menopause is a crisis are often experiencing other life-changing events like divorce, widowhood, dying elderly parents, children leaving home, retirement.

Does history have to repeat itself? Will “Intrinsa” become the Premarin of the twenty-first century? I don’t believe for a minute that “Intrinsa” prescriptions will be confined to surgically menopausal women with low libido. The FDA has approved off-label prescribing but it must foresee that, as happened with the Viagra boom, this new drug will be requested by many people on whom it has not been tested. Believing that it’s safe, these women may well become the guinea pigs of the twenty-first century. Let’s not let that happen.

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