Hormone replacement therapy and ovarian carcinoma

The authors of this meta-analysis regard the relation between the use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and ovarian carcinoma as possibly causal, as the risk is higher among current users, decreases upon discontinuation of the drug, and differs between tumour types. The research reported in this study adds ovarian carcinoma to the potential dangers of long-term HRT. Although ovarian carcinoma is a relatively rare disorder, its prognosis is generally poor, as it is often discovered at a late stage.

The balance between efficacy and side-effects of long-term preventive HRT was discussed in Gebu 2001; 35: 71-77 and Gebu 2002; 36: 109-115, and the negative conclusion has in essence remained unchanged since then. Its efficacy was proven for vasomotor complaints, although there was also a large placebo effect, as well as for complaints relating to urogenital atrophy. No efficacy has been found regarding the prevention of cardiovascular disorders or Alzheimer disease, and an elevated risk of malignities and thrombo-embolisms has been reported. The number of HRT users in the Netherlands continues to fall (www.gipdatabank.nl). The practice guidelines published by the Dutch College of General Practitioners (NHG) only recommend short-term use of HRT for severe and debilitating climacteric symptoms, and discourage long-term use. The Dutch Society of Obstetricians and gynaecologists (NVOG) is less clear-cut in its 2005 recommendations: HRT for more than five years can be considered if the HRT is still indicated for the treatment of severe vasomotor symptoms.

References*


*The literature refers to the Dutch text