

SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

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NATIONAL FIVE-YEAR STUDY TO EVALUATE SAFETY OF ESTROGEN TREATMENT FOLLOWING UTERINE CANCER

DALLAS — June 12, 1997 — Women who have survived cancer of the uterus have not been considered good candidates for estrogen replacement therapy (ERT), prescribed to alleviate many of the symptoms of menopause, but one UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas researcher is questioning that assumption.

Dr. David Scott Miller, associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology, is part of a group of researchers from around the country who will study the safety of estrogen therapy following treatment for uterine cancer. It has been thought that ERT would cause recurrence of the cancer.

"All around the United States researchers in women's gynecologic cancers are reconsidering this assumption," said Miller, holder of the Dallas Foundation Chair in Gynecologic Oncology. "Actually, there is no evidence that ERT causes a recurrence of uterine cancer, and there is some evidence, including two scientific studies done in the late 1980s, suggesting that estrogen is safe for these patients."

The ERT study, funded by the National Cancer Institute and organized by the Gynecologic Oncology Group, will evaluate two groups of women who have had uterine cancer. One group will receive estrogen; the other will receive a placebo. Participants will be checked every six months for the first three years of the study and then annually for the last two years of the study.

"What we learn from the study will give women and their physicians more information when considering whether to use estrogen following treatment for uterine cancer," Miller said.

Two out of every 10 postmenopausal women take estrogen or a combination of estrogen and progestin — a synthetic form of progesterone — to replace the hormones their

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bodies have stopped manufacturing. Estrogen taken after menopause also may help prevent both hip and spinal fractures associated with osteoporosis. Recent research has revealed that estrogen offers women protection against heart disease. Deaths from heart attacks can be cut in half with ERT.

Uterine cancer is the fourth-most-common cancer in women. This year, nearly 35,000 women will be diagnosed with the disease. Five-year survival rates for women whose cancers are diagnosed in the early stage is more than 90 percent.

For more information about participating in the ERT study at UT Southwestern, please call (214) 648-3026.

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