

# INTEGRATIVELY SPEAKING

Combining Traditional With Alternative  
Approaches To Medicine

## Bioidentical Hormones For Anxiety & Depression In Women

By James Roach, MD



Biochemist Phyllis Bronson has spent 10 years investigating anxiety and depression in women entering menopause. Her important research has found that success depends on using sufficient doses of bioidentical hormones; in the process, she is essentially rewriting what optimal hormone levels should be in these women. A lifelong vegetarian who takes daily mountain hikes, her extensive experience and focus on achieving emotional wellness in women by restoring natural hormones puts her in the top tier of American experts in this area. Her experience mirrors mine in treating women in midlife and after ovary removal: revitalized women can reclaim their life with proper treatment.

Dr. Bronson has found the calming female hormone progesterone to be a very safe molecule. She finds that doses up to 10 times higher than normally used may be necessary to resolve anxiety and panic in her clients. As progesterone plays a vital role in reducing estrogen's potential negative effects, higher progesterone levels may reduce overall risk. In my practice, a patient's obsessive-compulsive disorder has unexpectedly shown marked improvement with bioidentical hormones - likely a benefit of progesterone. Men also can benefit from low doses of progesterone as it blocks conversion of testosterone to estrogen; estrogen appears to adversely affect the prostate. Dr. Bronson always gives low doses of DHEA and progesterone when prescribing testosterone to males. Progesterone

effects last approximately 12 hours so giving a small dose in the morning is usually needed (though with anxiety and panic, a bigger dose); a large dose before bedtime promotes

sleep.

Similarly, she has found conventional estrogen doses are often insufficient to lift hormonally-induced depression. Larger doses of estradiol, the estrogen most impacting the brain, are required for hormonally-induced depression, and can give an immediate lift

from 'brain fog' - an impairment in memory and focus resulting from loss of normal estrogen production. Regaining a complete feeling of normality often takes a year. Estriol, the weakest estrogen, can be used in even larger doses to counter risk from strong estradiol. Dr. Bronson finds that a midday dose of testosterone, the hormone supporting libido, strength, and confidence, can give a timely energy boost.

In the now famous Women's Health Initiative study conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services; National Institutes of Health; and National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, when orally-conjugated horse estrogens were used without progestin, the incidence of breast cancer was lower, heart attack risk was not affected, and risk of fractures was reduced while stroke and clotting risks were higher. Although oral estrogen increases inflammatory C-reactive protein, this can be avoided by applying bioidentical estrogen to the skin; clotting effects may also be lower. Adding daily fish oil, which protects against breast cancer, also diminishes clotting and perhaps stroke.

It is increasingly apparent that many common psychiatric disorders have a large hormonal aspect. Ultimately, correction of hormonal imbalances may be found more effective than medication or counseling in resolving symptoms of anxiety and depression in women transitioning to menopause.

