

GYNAECOLOGY & OBSTETRICS UPDATE

Issue 61

October, 2007

Author

T.M. Malak

MB, BCh., M.Sc.,
Ph.D., DFFP,
MRCOG, FRCOG

Consultant
Obstetrician
Gynaecologist &
Urogynaecologist

Address

Esperance Private
Hospital
Eastbourne
Tel: 01323 414816/
410717/ 410929
Fax: 01323 730313

Web address
For Professionals
MarkMalak.com
For Patients
MrMalak.com
Finalist

**HOSPITAL
DOCTOR**

**AWARD
2005**

Reference

Ovarian cancer and
HRT in the Million
Women Study:

Lancet
2007;369:1667.

Lancet.
2007;369:1703.

Does HRT increase the risk of ovarian cancer?

Ovarian cancer is usually diagnosed late; for this reason, it is the most lethal gynaecologic cancer in UK. It is estimated that 6700 develop the condition and 4600 die from it every year.

Million Women Study

In this a massive cohort study, 948,567 postmenopausal women were surveyed between 1996 and 2001. Participants had no history of bilateral oophorectomy or ovarian cancer upon entry into the trial. Of these women, 50% had never used HRT, 30% were current users, and 20% had used it in the past. Over the course of the trial, 2,273 ovarian cancers were diagnosed, and 1,593 women died from the disease.

Results

Compared with never users, women who had currently used HRT for longer than 5 years had a higher risk of 1) being given a diagnosis of ovarian cancer (relative risk 1.20) and 2) dying from ovarian cancer (relative risk 1.23). This means that current HRT users are on average 20% more likely to develop and die from the disease than those had never received HRT. It is estimated that 1000 extra women in the UK may have died from ovarian cancer between 1991-2005 due to HRT. However, current users with less than 5 years of use had no significantly elevated risk. Both oestrogen-only and combination HRT were associated with ovarian cancer in current users in this trial. The findings are similar to those in regard to HRT and the risk of breast cancer. In the WHI trial, there was no elevated risk of breast cancer when a woman used combination HRT for less than 5 years.

Conclusion

Current users of HRT were significantly more likely to develop ovarian cancer, and to die from it, than never users were. Specifically, 5 or more years of current HRT use resulted in 1 additional case of incident ovarian cancer for every 2,500 users and 1 additional death from ovarian cancer for every 3,300 users. Past HRT users had no elevation in risk.

A shorter duration of HRT does not appear to increase the risk of ovarian cancer and will probably serve the needs of many symptomatic, newly menopausal women.

Fast Track

Five or more years of unopposed oestrogen or combination HRT may increase the risk of ovarian cancer by 20%

This makes the total incidence of ovarian, breast & endometrial cancers is 63% higher in current users of HRT for more than 5 years than never users