

Anti-aging hormones: Little or no benefit and the risks are high

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In the wake of the American Medical Association's (AMA) Council on Science and Public Health's recently released report "The use of hormones for "anti-aging": a review of efficacy and safety," a leading medical authority has criticized the use of anti-aging hormones.

Dr. Thomas T. Perls, an associate professor of medicine at Boston University School of Medicine has long spoken out against the promotion and distribution of growth hormones for non-medical uses such as anti-aging and sports.

In an editorial appearing in the Future Medicine journal *Aging Health*, Dr. Perls applauds the courage and example displayed by the AMA in its recently published assessment of the risks and benefits of growth hormone, [testosterone](#), estrogen and DHEA for anti-aging. The editorial entitled "Anti-aging medicine: what should we tell our patients?" is freely available at <http://www.futuremedicine.com/doi/full/10.2217/ahe.10.11>

There have always been nostrums and potions peddled for eternal youth. Most recently these have been what some entrepreneurs call "bio-identical" or "all-natural" hormones. What they mean by these terms varies from substances made from vegetables - such as soy or yams, which some claim have estrogen-like effects to, more commonly, drugs that are exactly the same as hormones prescribed by endocrinologists for specific diseases. Dr. Perls remarked: "The terms bio-identical or all-natural, particularly in the case of the drugs prescribed by

endocrinologists, misleadingly convey a sense of safety to the gullible customer. Arsenic is all-natural to, and it even has some medical uses, but it is anything but safe."

"The AMA's review of the risks and benefits of these hormones in the setting of anti-aging and athletic enhancement is very important given its inclusion of the consensus and position statements of the key professional medical societies as well as the federal agencies that guard public health." states Dr. Perls in the editorial.

The editorial summarizes the AMA's assessment for each of the purported anti-aging hormones and essentially the bottom line of his argument is that in terms of anti-aging, the risks of these hormones outweigh the little or no benefit. Dr. Perls denounces the marketing of these hormones, particularly growth [hormone](#) and anabolic steroids (anabolic steroids are variations of testosterone), for anti-aging. He also provides guidelines for spotting "red flags of quackery" and basic advice that physicians can lend to their patients in their pursuit of healthy aging.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

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