

Study finds women seek anti-aging clinicians to treat menopausal symptoms

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Feeling that conventional doctors did not take their suffering seriously, women instead sought out hormonal treatments for menopausal symptoms from anti-aging clinicians, according to a Case Western Reserve University study that investigated the appeal of anti-aging medicine.

Some women also feared the harmful side effects from conventional [hormone replacement therapy](#) (HRT) that had shown increased risks for cancer, heart disease and [high blood pressure](#). Yet, they thought that the bioidentical, "natural" hormones their anti-aging doctors prescribed were safe, despite a lack of conventional scientific evidence to that fact.

Michael Flatt, a doctoral candidate in sociology at Case Western Reserve University, and Jennifer Fishman, assistant professor at McGill University, will discuss these and other findings during the presentation "'Hormones Are Where It's At': Bioidentical Hormones, Menopausal Women, and Anti-Aging Medicine" on Monday, Aug. 18, at the 109th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Aug. 16-19, in San Francisco.

The findings about the women's attitudes are part of a larger study in the Department of Bioethics at Case Western Reserve that investigated the views of scientists, doctors and patients involved with anti-aging science and medicine.

The researchers, who conducted the study with Richard Settersten Jr.,

professor of public health at Oregon State University, explored what it was about anti-aging medicine that appealed to women, given that the costs for care and prescribed medications were not covered by medical insurance.

Was it vanity to maintain their youthful appearance or some other motivation?

Findings from in-depth interviews with 25 women who used bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT) prescribed by an anti-aging clinician bucked the vanity-driven stereotype.

Instead, Flatt said the women told researchers they wanted to relieve their [menopausal symptoms](#), feel energized and avoid chronic illnesses associated with aging. The women also described their motivation as wanting to return to an "optimal" state and believed that bioidentical hormones would do this.

"Hormones became the panacea reported by the women," Flatt said. "They felt that if the hormones were in order, they'd be back on track."

The anti-aging clinicians prescribed BHRT after the women took a series of tests to determine the causes of their menopausal symptoms, which purportedly included hormonal and vitamin deficiencies. They were prescribed BHRT, hormones derived from plants, like soy and yams. The hormonal therapies are unregulated by the Food and Drug Administration and made to order by compounding pharmacists.

Among the reasons the [women](#) said they found anti-aging medicine attractive were:

- Patients received more time and attention from the clinician.
- Medications were seen as "natural" and thought to return one to

an optimal state of being.

- BHRT was perceived as safer than conventional [hormone](#) replacement therapy.

Provided by Case Western Reserve University

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