

In Balance

Published by **Women In Balance**™



Welcome to **In Balance** the quarterly newsletter published by **Women In Balance (WIB)** a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping women achieve optimal health, wellness and hormone balance in their lives.

In this issue, we catch you up on **Women In Balance** activities and provide news, research and actionable information for women and health professionals.

For more information about **Women In Balance**, our mission, educational resources, programs and initiatives, as well as how to sign up to get our newsletter, and become a member, go to: <http://www.womeninbalance.org>



Photograph courtesy of boomerangstock.com

“At this stage of the game, I *know* that I know. Before, I just hoped that I knew.”

-*Jeanie Linders, Writer/Producer - Menopause The Musical*

In this Issue

Balance Steps in Your Journey to Wellness:

- Mindfulness! How is Your State of Awareness? We give you tips on how to better be fully present, moment-to-moment and why it is important to all that we do
- Your New Best Friend: Sleep. Get some good Zzzzs ... your body will thank you for it!

Ask The Doctor:

- Is Menopause Seasonal?
- The Scoop on Progesterone Cream

What's Happening in Research:

- HRT and Breast Cancer Risk: What you need to know
- Up Close and Personal: Dr. Jane Murray, Chair of Women in Balance (WIB), Interviews Dr. Howard Hodis and Dr. Frank Stanczyk, WIB Scientific Advisors. Learn about their research efforts that are advancing women's health
- If You Have a Brown Belt at Starbucks: read about the latest research on people who drink four or more cups of coffee a day!

News and Notes:

- Women in Balance Holds Inaugural Meeting of Scientific Advisors
- All Natural Remedy for Beating the Blues: Exercise

Interview: “Menopause the Musical” Star Fredena J. Williams! How to (Hilariously!) Celebrate Women and The Change

What's In... What's Out

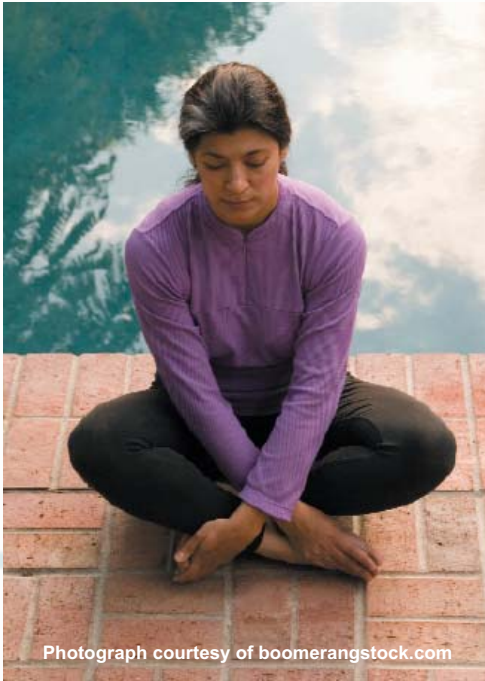
IN

Discussing menopausal symptoms and natural products at girl gatherings
Acceptance, leading to peaceful daily living
Taking time for massage and manicure without guilt
Enjoying exercise
www.womeninbalance.org

OUT

Fighting the process of aging alone
Botox-Mania until your face freezes
Supermom to the Rescue ism
Couch Potato and Bon-Bon Behaviors
Watching way too much reality TV

Balance Step - Mindfulness



Photograph courtesy of boomerangstock.com

Why. Mindfulness is a state of *balanced* awareness. It means paying attention to your experiences moment-to-moment and being fully present.

When we are present and mindful, we can bring awareness to the choices we make including how we eat, our strengths and weaknesses, satisfaction level, purpose in life, and the health of the community and nature around us.

Mindfulness leads to better choices. When we pause, take a moment to be mindful, we can interrupt a habit or pattern that may be increasing cortisol (stress) hormones and thus contributing to hormonal imbalance. We can choose balance on our path to wellness and good health through cultivating mindfulness.

Balance Step: To cultivate mindfulness try any of these tips:

- Find a quiet space and pay attention to your breathing
- Focus on the sounds of nature
- Let a daily ritual, such as putting on make-up, gardening or answering the phone, become a trigger to pull your awareness back “into the moment”
- Create rituals of comfort, such as before bed bathing, putting on lotion, lighting a candle, as a way to center your mind and let the cares of the day float away
- Turn life “irritants” into a mindful moment and choose to not let your mind wander into “what if”
- Minimize caffeine in coffee, chocolate, and over-the-counter stimulants that disrupt peace of mind and hormonal balance
- Learn to meditate
- Before you go to sleep take some mindful breaths concentrating only on the flow of air in and out. If your mind wanders to the concerns of the day, gently bring your awareness back to your breath

Want to create balance and learn new tips on YOUR journey to wellness?

Check out BALANCE STEPS. www.womeninbalance.org

Ask the Doctor



Jane Murray, MD
Founding medical chair of **Women In Balance** and Director of the Sastun Center of Integrative Health Care

Dear Dr. Jane:

I have been in menopause for a while now, and wonder if other perimenopausal and postmenopausal women experience what's happening to me. I always thought that menopausal symptoms would be fairly constant, but I have found that sometimes, the symptoms like hot flashes and sleeplessness will ease off for as much as a month at a time, then return to bother me a lot more. Can menopause be seasonal? What's going on in my body?

Jeanine (Oakland, CA)

Dear Jeanine,

Traversing menopause can be a wild ride, just as you describe. Early in the menopausal transition, there may be days, weeks or even months when the ovaries may still be making a variable amount of estrogen and thus symptoms such as hot flashes and sleep disruption may vary considerably.

Other factors like alcohol intake, a diet high in saturated fat and sugar, inadequate exercise levels, smoking and stress can all contribute to increases in hot flashes and sleep problems, so you may find relative calm in your menopause travels interspersed with difficulties depending upon certain lifestyle choices. If symptoms are bothersome, you may want to work with your health care provider to find a plan to ease this transition.

Dear Dr. Jane:

I use a progesterone cream topically every evening to help me deal with restlessness and hot flashes at night when I want to sleep. It really does seem to help. My question is this: The product instructions tell me to stop using the cream for a week a month. Do I really have to do that? I need my rest, and the menopause monster wants its cream nightly!

Connie (Akron, Ohio)

Dear Connie,

The package insert that accompanies most over-

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Photograph courtesy of boomerangstock.com

Your New Best Friend: Good Sleep

Lack of good quality sleep affects everything you do. Sleep problems can affect women at different times, but are especially common in perimenopausal women and increase after age 40. People who are

unable to sleep well tend to be heavier. Lack of sleep disrupts the production of hormones that regulate stress, feelings of hunger and satiety.

more reason to find ways to sleep!

At night during sleep, hormones rebalance. Good sleep helps you ward off infections and illness. Not sleeping makes people of all ages cranky. Remember the old saying, "Everything looks better after a good night's sleep." Mom was right. Sleep helps everything. Sleeping problems can come from a variety of factors including stress, mental health problems, disease, increased use of medications and hormone imbalances. The good news is that they can be reversible with the right approach.

We probably don't need to tell YOU this, but good sleep enhances everything you do. We think it's one of the most important things you can do for yourself. It helps you maintain energy, well-being, activities and goals. There are many ways to encourage your body to rest. So don't silently suffer ... find the right answers for your body and mind, and get some good sleep! Send us your good ideas for a better night's rest, and we'll share them in Women in Balance!

(Editor's Note: I tune into my body's natural rhythms when I can't sleep with some little mini-move exercises I discovered on soundersleep.com. Try them, they work!)



the-counter progesterone cream products usually does indicate that one should stop using the cream for 1-2 weeks monthly. This recommendation comes from the philosophy of following the way a menstruating woman's ovaries make progesterone – only during the second half of each monthly cycle, or "luteal phase." Prior to ovulation (called the "follicular phase"), the ovary makes virtually no progesterone, but after ovulation progesterone is produced in order to prepare the uterus for possible pregnancy – "pro-gestation." Thus we women typically make progesterone in this cyclical way every month.

Many clinicians believe that giving the body hormones like estrogen and progesterone that are identical ("bio-identical") to the ones we have been making all along is more sensible than using synthetic drugs that don't match the body's own identical hormones. Estrogen can help hot flashes and night sweats that are more severe, and vaginal dryness. Progesterone is often helpful for more mild hot flashes and sleep problems that accompany perimenopause and menopause, and progesterone balances the estrogen that a woman may still be making herself early in the menopause transition. Additionally, many clinicians feel that mimicking the normal cyclic production of progesterone is more "natural" as well.

In menopausal women who are not having periods, it is common practice to provide supplemental progesterone on a daily basis, and not cycle it as during the menstruating years. No one really knows for sure if this practice is preferable to cycling the progesterone, so you have asked an important question about which more research is needed. We need answers to just these kinds of patient-centered queries in order to know how to help women like you who feel best with continuous progesterone use. If you are using a progesterone cream, make sure you look for one that indicates "USP progesterone" on the label and has been tested.

At [Women In Balance](http://WomenInBalance.org) we recommend that women work with a qualified health care provider to develop a plan that is optimal for your personal health and hormone balance. You may need to get tested to determine your current hormone levels. And please consider joining [Women In Balance](http://WomenInBalance.org) to support our efforts to promote important research in this crucial area of women's health!

GO TO WWW.WOMENINBALANCE.ORG TO JOIN!

Progestins and progesterone in hormone replacement therapy and the risk of breast cancer

Controlled studies and most observational studies published over the last 5 years suggest that the addition of synthetic progestins to estrogen in hormone replacement therapy (HRT), particularly in continuous-combined regimen, increases the risk of breast cancer (BC) compared to estrogen alone. In this important review of the literature on HRT and the risk of breast cancer, Campagnoli and colleagues at the Sant Anna Gynecological Hospital in Torino, Italy conclude that the balance of the in vivo evidence is that progesterone does not have a cancer promoting effect on breast tissue. "We therefore suggest that when HRT is indicated, preparations containing progesterone, and *not* a synthetic progestin should be used, according to a sequential or cyclic-combined regimen. In this way the risk of endometrial cancer is minimized without increasing the risk of breast cancer."

Journal of Steroid Biochemistry & Molecular Biology 96 (2005)

Up Close and Personal

Talking with Howard Hodis, M.D. on the landmark ELITE study, and Frank Stanczyk, Ph.D.

By Jane Murray, MD, Chair of **Women In Balance**

Women In Balance has been honored to get some great guidance and feedback from two members of our Scientific Advisory Network (SAN): Frank Stanczyk, PhD, Research Professor in the reproductive endocrinology division of the Obstetrics & Gynecology Department and Howard Hodis, MD, Director of the Atherosclerosis Research Center and Professor of Medicine and Preventive Medicine, both at the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California.

Dr. Hodis' current landmark study – the ELITE (Early versus Late Intervention Trial with Estradiol) study – is enrolling subjects now. This prospective, randomized double-blind, placebo-controlled study funded by the National Institutes of Health will evaluate the differences in carotid artery intima thickness (a measure of atherosclerotic build-up and thus risk for heart disease), cognitive functioning, and mood in women given bioidentical estradiol orally plus bioidentical progesterone via a vaginal gel.

Vaginal progesterone was selected, Hodis says, because "we wanted to avoid synthetic progestins and also the metabolites of oral progesterone." Synthetic progestins appear now in re-

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Women In Balance Holds Inaugural Meeting of Scientific Advisors

By Margaret Groves, M.Ed.



A snapshot of meeting attendees: (in order from left to right) Frank Stanczyk, PhD, Jane Murray, MD, Dot O'Very, RN, Joel Hargrove, MD, Margaret Groves, M.Ed.

On October 12, the inaugural meeting of the **Women In Balance** Scientific Advisory Network (SAN) was held in Nashville, TN, during the Annual Meeting of the North American Menopause Society (NAMS), to explore strategic opportunities to promote and expand research on "natural" (bioidentical) hormones for women's health.

The Women In Balance (WIB) Board of Directors met with two of its' scientific advisors, Frank Stanczyk, PhD and Joel Hargrove, MD for a rich and rewarding evening. The SAN is comprised of leading researchers in women's hormonal health and provides expertise and guidance to **WIB** (see members below). In addition to its scientific advisors, the meeting included **Women In Balance** team members Jane Murray, MD, Sharon MacFarland, Colleen Reilly, MPA, Deb Soholt, RN, Dot O'Very, RN and Margaret Groves, M.Ed.

The historic SAN meeting, chaired by Dr. Murray, MD, Board Chair of **WIB**, allowed for free and candid dialogue about the pertinent issues surrounding hormonal health research and practice, and resulted in the key recommendations (listed below) for advancing scientific understanding and research.

The timing for the first SAN meeting could not have been more prescient. Today, we are witnessing a seismic shift in how women and doctors view hormone therapy. Last March, the government reported on trends in women turning to, and doctors prescribing, other options in the aftermath of the Women's Health Initiative, such as bioidentical hormones, lower dose and delivery options of conventional hormone therapy, and herbs for menopausal and other health issues - this after roughly 30 years of one-size-fits-all treatment with synthetic HRT.

And, although this years' NAMS conference

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search studies to be more metabolically damaging than natural (bio-identical) progesterone. Subjects will be followed for 2-5 years. Comparison will be made between placebo versus active treatment groups, and between women who start the hormone therapy at an early stage of their menopause transition, and those who start later.

“The ELITE study, when it's done, will be the crowning achievement of my scientific research career,” says Hodis, the Harry J. Bauer and Dorothy Bauer Rawlins Professor of Cardiology. He has been a leader in studying hormone effects on the cardiovascular system in women. In his research pursuits, Dr. Hodis and colleagues elucidated that while lipid lowering drugs do not offer primary prevention against heart disease in women, hormones given early in the postmenopausal transition do confer cardiac risk reduction benefits. (To read more about the ELITE study, or to see if you are eligible to participate as a research subject, go to www.usc.edu/medicine/aru.)

Dr. Hodis says a little publicized issue discovered in the Women's Health Initiative study about hormones and metabolism included the fact that “a significant 20% reduction in the risk for diabetes was found in women in the active hormone replacement group” – a remarkable piece of information that has not been brought out in the media blitz about WHI. Other poorly advertised WHI data include a recent analysis which showed that once other causes of breast cancer are taken into account, the difference in breast cancer between estrogen and progestin is no longer statistically significant.

Dr. Hodis applauds **Women In Balance** for its efforts to develop grassroots support for more research and education on women's hormonal health and the range of individualized approaches. “We need a big voice coming from women themselves to promote funding for more research in this area,” he says.

Dr. Frank Stanczyk has published widely and has been at the forefront of developing and standardizing many of the assays used to measure hormone levels for research studies and clinical use. His work in the areas of menopause, contraception, breast cancer, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease and hyperandrogenic states such as polycystic ovarian syndrome gives him a perspective that is unique among women's hormone scientists. Dr. Stanczyk supports **WIB** efforts to help educate physi-

was predominantly focused on more traditional hormone replacement therapy, it held a sold-out pre-conference symposium, “Understanding the Controversy: Hormone Testing and Bioidentical Hormones” in recognition of the increased presence, utilization and demand for bioidenticals. The **WIB** scientific advisors' meeting was a discussion of the whole picture of female hormonal health, and ways to advance and publish bioidentical hormone research. After a fast-flowing and thought provoking discussion, Drs. Stanczyk and Hargrove provided the following key insights and recommendations to **WIB**:

- It is vitally important to educate women about all aspects of hormone therapy and the choices that are available to them, but it is equally important to provide state-of-the-art education to clinicians. In particular, younger clinicians and residents should be sought out for education to capitalize on curiosity to understand current research and clinical practice of hormone therapy. It was also recommended that new research opportunities be explored with new residents.
- The SAN, as a prestigious group of nationally known researchers and clinicians, should start publishing review articles as well as new research that would be written and/or endorsed by the SAN group of advisors to expand information and clinician understanding of the state of the science and future research needs.
- It is essential in future publications, to define terms such as “bioidentical” (i.e., hormones that are identical in structure and function to those produced in the human body), and moreover, recognize the confusion and controversy over this terminology that may block exploration and discussions within the medical community.
- Seed money must be sought for **WIB** to sponsor more research. Since only the delivery system of bioidentical hormones can be patented, it is and has been difficult to fund research. Supporters with the means to give financially to this neglected area of research are crucial.
- When conducting research, it is crucial to focus on selecting the most reliable laboratory for centralized hormone assays to ensure absolute consistency of research data.

Women In Balance is honored to include the following top

cians about the science regarding hormones.

“Many clinicians do not really understand the science – they get much of their information from the media,” he says. Dr. Stanczyk also collaborates with researchers around the world as well as colleagues at the USC Keck School of Medicine, like Dr. Howard Hodis – a fellow member of the **Women In Balance** Scientific Advisory Network – on several studies.

Many thanks to Drs. Stanczyk and Hodis, whose critical research is so vital to advancing women’s hormonal health. **Women In Balance** applauds these fine scientists for their work and is honored to have them as members of our Scientific Advisory Network!

For more information about **Women In Balance** and the Scientific Advisory Network go to <http://www.womeninbalance.org>



clinical researchers in its' Scientific Advisory Network:
 Joel Hargrove, MD, Vanderbilt University Cool Springs Clinic in Franklin, TN
 Helene Leonetti, MD, Bethlehem GYN Associates, Bethlehem, PA
 S. Mitchell Harman, MD, PhD, Director and President, Kronos Longevity Research Institute, Phoenix, AZ
 Howard Hodis, MD, University of Southern California, Keck School of Medicine
 Eleanor Rogan, PhD, Univ. of Nebraska, Eppley Institute
 Frank Stanczyk, PhD, Professor of Research, University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine
 Kenna Stephenson, MD, F.A.A.F.P., Professor of Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine, Northcentral Univ., Prescott, AZ, Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, The University of Texas Health Center, Tyler, TX

Exercise: Help for the Blues



Exercise is not a cure for depression, but doctors in the know often prescribe some daily physical activity if you're suffering from symptoms of

depression or anxiety. Exercise can help you keep your symptoms in check according to researchers at Mayo Clinic. As little as 10 to 15 minutes (optimal 30) a day have been shown to improve moods for a period of time.

Exercise positively affects levels of mood-enhancing neurotransmitters, boosts feel-good endorphins, releases tension in muscles, helps you sleep better, and reduces levels of the stress hormone cortisol. The combined effect can improve symptoms like sadness, anxiety, irritability, stress, fatigue, anger, self-doubt, and hopelessness.

If exercise is your all natural remedy you might experience improved self-confidence and a distraction from your depression. Also, the social interaction from exercise can lead to a healthy coping strategy.

(Excerpt from FT Fitness Together)

WIB editor note: Exercise, especially the weight bearing kind, can also naturally increase depleted hormone levels like testosterone, and lower stress hormone levels.



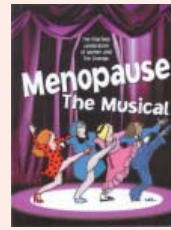
If you have a brown belt at Starbucks ...

A team of researchers at Duke University Medical Centre report that in a study of 72 habitual coffee drinkers, people who drink four or more cups of coffee a day showed elevated blood pressure and significantly higher levels of stress hormones all day and into

the evening, creating a scenario in which the body acts like it is continually under stress.

According to James Lane, Associate Research Professor of Psychiatry at Duke University, stress hormones are vital to the body's ability to react quickly with stress or danger, but over a prolonged period of heightened production, can damage the heart and lungs.

Note: The association with hormonal imbalance should not be lost on **In Balance** readers. Caffeine in excess can wreak havoc on the adrenal glands ability to regulate stress hormone levels, particularly during menopause. Try substituting herbal and/or green teas for balance.



Women In Balance held a successful benefit performance with the Kansas City production of *Menopause The Musical*, and caught up with Fredena Williams one of the stars from the show.

Set in a department store, where four women with seemingly nothing in common but a black lace bra meet by chance, *Menopause The Musical* pokes fun at things such as hot flashes, memory loss, mood swings, wrinkles, night sweats and eating binges.

When **WIB** caught up with Fredena J. Williams we found her to be very like the young business woman she plays in the musical, menopausal, and matter-of-fact about life.

"It's all in the way you deal with it," she says. "Menopause often has a negative stigma, so the beauty of the musical is that it gets women laughing out loud and helps them to view menopause not as an end, but as a new beginning.

The show's intended message that menopause is a passage, but should no longer be the *silent* passage, encourages a healthy dialogue about issues of aging and women's health, and a unique opportunity to align with **Women In Balance** to promote the mutual goal of raising awareness among female audiences.

Fredena calls herself *the new face of menopause*, embracing her part as "Power Woman" with gusto. "I had a hysterectomy at 30 which meant no kids for me, but life goes on and has been getting better. I sure have saved a lot of money on Tampax! Yes, there are nights I can't sleep and sometimes I want to eat everything I see. But when performing for an audience of 400 screaming, laughing women, you realize, 'I'm not alone!' You have 399 new girlfriends all going through it and you just want to hug them all." As Fredena and her costars sing out the symptoms of menopause, she hears women in the audience exclaiming, 'that sounds like me, I did that just this morning!'

"We now have menopause in common with our mothers!" Fredena chortles. "It's the end of motherhood and the beginning of the next phase of life—along with *attitude* that puts the music in the menopause!"

Menopause: The Musical is a global event entertaining audiences in more than 100 cities in the U.S. and ten countries!

See the website: menopausethemusical.com



Licia Watson, Teri Adams, Fredena J. Williams and Debra Bluford (clockwise from top left) face the change of life in *Menopause*.

WIB Guiding Principles

Balance: The foundation of optimal women's health begins with **Balance Steps:** a wholesome nutritious diet, movement & exercise, stress management, enough quality sleep, and only if needed appropriate, nutritional and natural hormone supplements. There exists a growing spectrum of health producing options and treatments to help women achieve their best health and reduce their risk for disease.

Individuality: There is no one dose or approach to achieve optimal health and hormone balance that fits every woman. Ideally, a woman should work with a qualified health care professional to learn about her options and to determine through symptom analysis or testing whether she needs to supplement hormones. Not all women need hormone treatment, but for those who do, natural hormones are in option, but only in safe, physiologic doses prescribed by a medical professional according to need.

Support of Real Solutions for Women's Health: We promote and advance research, public and professional education and media awareness on safe, effective, natural solutions for women's wellness and hormonal health issues. We educate key decision-makers about the need for expanding research for optimal health and disease prevention

Altruism: Women In Balance is a non-profit organization and does not promote commercial products, entities or individuals. Women In Balance conducts several strategic programs including:

- **Create Balance: Your Journey to Wellness**, a national public awareness Campaign for women over forty
- **WIB website** providing interactive tools, medically sound health information and solutions for women and health professional resources including a full compendium research reference section
- **National and local community education events** for women and health professionals with renowned **WIB** health experts
- **Promoting and expanding research** on hormone balancing solutions and disease prevention for women in conjunction with the **WIB Scientific Advisory Network**



If you find our nonprofit organization worthy of your critical support, please consider contributing by clicking on <http://www.womeninbalance.org>. Your gift will have a huge impact by helping us reach and educate more women about real solutions for achieving optimal health, hormone balance, and reducing their risk for disease. Also, your gift goes to promoting and expanding research and access on the spectrum of natural wellness and hormone balancing options. Join our important cause today!

