

More Letters

Progesterone Can Be Taken Orally

Editor:

Your June review of Betty Kamen's book on hormone replacement in menopause, osteoporosis, and PMS made some good points, but it repeats a serious error, that progesterone "cannot be taken orally."

I believe that idea was a simple fabrication of someone in the drug industry in the 1940s to promote their own new synthetic progestin, because I could never find the source for the idea, which simply began appearing in the literature without supporting data, when new products needed promotion.

Human milk from healthy women contains significant amounts of progesterone, which makes milk an important part of the infant's endocrine system. Associated with fat droplets, progesterone enters the blood by the chylomicron pathway, permitting it to avoid inactivation or excretion.

When taken in the powdered or micropulverized form (even if the powder is packed in oil) progesterone doesn't enter the blood as chylomicrons, and so is quickly processed into a water-soluble

metabolite, which is excreted. This metabolite cross-reacts with active progesterone in the usual analysis of blood levels, and creates some medical confusion, since symptoms and measurements don't relate in the usual ways.

Betty Kamen cites my book, *Nutrition for Women*, as a source for the idea about oral progesterone. I believe she might not have read my material itself, since my comparisons in that book had to do with the superiority of skin-absorption over injected progesterone. In many other publications, including *Progesterone in Orthomolecular Medicine* (all my books are available directly from me), and several articles in the *Townsend Letter*, I have described the efficacy of oral progesterone dissolved in vitamin E.

I have the patent on that form, and some manufacturers have unscrupulously implied that they are using my formula. I have tested several such preparations, in preparing my patent infringement case. Recently I have examined some of the products of a Portland company (a company which has led many people to think I am involved in their business). What I found was that the progesterone had rapidly gone out of solution, forming bizarre hair-like crystals, which gave the solution a slightly stringy texture. Natural progesterone in natural vitamin E remains stable in solution, and I believe

the only explanation for the bizarre crystallization that I and others have observed would be the use of synthetic polymer-substances in the solution. In that form, it doesn't infringe my patent, but it would seem to be mislabeled and misrepresented.

The FDA has erroneously classified progesterone with synthetic progestins, and hasn't made any attempt to help the public separate promotional fictions from physiological facts. In fact, they have themselves created additional fictions about progesterone, ascribing properties of the synthetic progestins to progesterone itself, resulting in tremendous injury to the public health. (If that agency strictly followed the rules of administrative law, it might not be perceived as the servant of the industry which it is supposed to regulate.) The ineffectiveness of oral progesterone is one of the fictions that needs to be corrected, and the popular and alternative medical press is where that correction can be achieved. Betty Kamen's book is better than most of the books on osteoporosis and menopause, but it looks a little too much like a promotional effort in support of Dr. Lee's cream, and I am sorry that one of my books is mentioned as seeming to support the fiction that the skin cream is better than the oral oil form.

If she ever rewrites the book, I hope she will consider the evidence that thyroid hormone plays a major role in rebuilding bones, and that unsaturated oils (via prostaglandins and a variety of other hormonal derangements) and estrogen (via promotion of prolactin) have a role in causing osteoporosis. Oral progesterone dissolved in vitamin E is a powerful protectant of every system and tissue, including the bones, but it is important to understand its wonderful effects in the contexts of physiology and ecology. I think the properties of natural progesterone provides us with a scientific paradigm, similar to the concept of "adaptogens" in medicine, but even more basic, involving physical self-ordering processes. Increasingly, our health will depend on understanding this paradigm of life's resistance to harm.

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- Please have your manuscript typed, doublespaced, pages numbered, printed with a dark print and a current address listed.
- Mail flat with no staples.
- Computer disc specifications: Must be 3 1/2" disc in either Macintosh or DOS format, send hard copy for verification of format, discs will not be returned unless specified.
- You will receive a copy via first class mail of the issue in which your work is published.
- A reference sentence has a reference number at the end.³
- References are written as follows:
3. Garner DM, Garfinkel PE, Socio-cultural factors in the development of anorexia nervosa. *Psychol Med* 1980; 10:647-56.
- References for books are written as follows:
3. Benson, Herbert, MD, *The Mind/Body Effect*, Simon and Schuster, NY, 1979.