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Women Can Breathe Sigh of Relief When Using Vaginal Estrogen to Treat Menopause Symptoms

New study reviews WHI data to confirm vaginal estrogen does not increase risk of heart disease, breast, or endometrial cancer

CLEVELAND, Ohio (October 11, 2017)—News flash...hot flashes aren't the only bothersome symptom of the menopause transition. Many postmenopausal women also experience sexual dysfunction and urinary problems that don't require estrogen pills but, rather, can be alleviated by vaginally administered estrogen. A new study shows that, despite previous misperceptions, this treatment option is not only effective, but also safe. The study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, October 11-14.

Vaginal estrogen in the form of a cream or suppository is highly effective in managing an array of sexual and urinary problems collectively referred to as the genitourinary syndrome of menopause. Despite its proven effectiveness, the use of vaginal estrogen has been restricted by concerns of women and their healthcare providers regarding its potential link to such serious health issues as coronary heart disease, breast cancer, stroke, and others. Examination of the data from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) Observational Study of more than 45,000 participants showed, however, that the use of vaginal estrogen does not significantly increase the risk of heart disease or cancer, including breast, colorectal, and endometrial cancer. Nor is it related to an elevated risk of such other concerns as stroke, pulmonary embolism, hip fracture, or death.

"These results should help reassure women regarding the safety of vaginal estrogen," says Dr. Carolyn Crandall, lead author of the study from the University of California in Los Angeles.

"Studies like these are so valuable to help dispel misperceptions that keep women from getting the relief they seek," says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director. "Women and their healthcare providers need to be armed with the latest facts so they can make informed decisions regarding their treatment options."

Drs. Crandall and Pinkerton are available for interviews before the presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.