



Linda Ojeda's Book

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## More News on Menopause without Drugs

—*By Noelle Robbins*

Controversial. Ahead of her time. A true pioneer. These are words that have been used to describe Linda Ojeda, PhD, author of the best-selling book "Menopause Without Medicine," now in its fifth edition.

For more than 30 years, Marin County resident Ojeda, has been an outspoken advocate for a natural approach to women's health issues; her book, translated into 12 languages, has been hailed as a "wellness bible." Recently, she sat down to offer personal insights and advice to Bay Area BusinessWoman readers.

**After producing the fourth edition of your highly successful book, Menopause Without Medicine, you vowed never to write another update. What changed your mind?**

There were many reasons. When I was going through menopause, every time I would go to the doctor, even if it was just for a healthy physical exam, they would say, "Well it's time for you to start hormone therapy (HRT)." And I [would say], "You know, I don't really think so. I've read the studies and there are some concerns here." And they would say, "Oh no, they're great," and would try to give me samples. I mean, I felt like I was going to a drug dealer.

However, when I developed the early stages of osteoporosis, I thought, okay, how many

choices do I have? I knew about bioidentical hormones and delved into the research concerning those hormones and felt that was the way to go. These hormones are called "bioidentical" because they match the hormones women's bodies make naturally and are better used.

Before the Woman's Health Initiative Study they were pushing HRT on me and I said no. Afterwards, I'm taking a form of HRT and they're saying, "You know, you really shouldn't do this." Women and their doctors are confused and concerned. I knew I had to finish what I started years ago — before menopause was even in the news.

**Based upon your experience with your doctors, do you have some suggestions for women on how to best approach their physicians?**

It is really ticklish, especially if you are not used to being this forward or aggressive with doctors. You can come prepared with studies or take a book. There are many good books, not just mine, that have the research in them. There are so many doctors who don't even know about bioidentical hormones. My doctor knows what I want to take, knows I'm up on the research, and he writes my prescriptions. I think he does it very hesitantly, but he does it. With some doctors, you can come with this research or books, others will totally reject whatever you have to say, and sometimes you just have to change doctors.

**Some have said that estrogen dominance may be the reason why many women can't conceive. What causes estrogen dominance and what are the symptoms?**

Once you start making estrogen, your body becomes very adept at it, and likes to do it. It is pretty clear that environmental estrogens also contribute. As does being overweight, as fat makes estrogen. If women have heavy periods that may be a clue. If they have painful breasts or PMS symptoms, that may be a clue. When you are making that much estrogen you don't actually ovulate. You have to ovulate to make progesterone, which is the hormone in the second half of a woman's cycle that balances estrogen.

**Which would also explain why some younger women are having a hard time getting pregnant.**

That's right. They're not ovulating. Balance is the most important thing. No matter what you are talking about, your hormones or your diet.

**Speaking of diet and lifestyle, what would you recommend to someone who only has 30 minutes a day to exercise?**

I would do something different almost every day. One day do aerobics, or take a walk uphill. It doesn't have to be high intensity. The next day, do weight training to keep your muscles and bones strong. Then yoga for flexibility. Maybe one day of dancing. I know a lot of women who walk and forget about their upper body. We need to do a little of everything for our hearts, bones, and minds.

**On the topic of bones, doctors and the media have done a great job telling women to take calcium for bone health. What about magnesium and vitamin D?**

Magnesium is involved in so many of the enzyme reactions in the body. It's so good for the heart. And you have to take it to help absorb the calcium, as with vitamin D. I know women who are taking straight calcium without magnesium. I don't understand it.

**What should women approaching midlife do to prepare themselves emotionally?**

I think the best thing they can do is have older friends. I have several friends who are older and I think, hmmm, when I'm their age I want to be like them. They are physically active, their minds are active, and they are creative.

**Any final words of wisdom for women in their 30s and 40s about approaching midlife?**

Keep a healthy diet, exercise and just go with the flow. With every phase of life comes loss from what you are leaving; but every phase also presents new opportunities that can be wonderful.

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