

Ongoing research with alternative estrogen-replacement therapy appears to hold promise. Specifically, scientists are discovering that these drugs, dubbed anti-estrogens, apparently afford the benefits of estrogen-replacement therapy without the potential of stimulating the growth of cancerous cells.

Raloxifene, droloxifene, tamoxifen, idoxifene, and a few as yet unnamed drugs are currently being tested for their efficacy in preventing osteoporosis or breast cancer (or both). For example, raloxifene has been shown to be effective in reducing bone loss and decreasing cholesterol levels in early human clinical trials. Nonetheless, much work lies ahead before a single anti-estrogen pill heads for market.

"This particular field is in its infancy," says Conrad Johnston, MD, professor of medicine at Indiana University School of Medicine. "That you can design an estrogen-like compound that will work in one place as an estrogen and as an antagonist someplace else is new and exciting, and I think will lead to better drugs," he predicts.

Dr Johnston's comments appear in an article in the August 2 issue of *The Wall Street Journal*.

Soy protein has an apparent cholesterol-lowering effect, according to research published in the August 3 issue of *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

In a meta-analysis, James W. Anderson, MD, of the University of Kentucky and his colleagues found that persons with cholesterol levels measuring more than 300 mg/dL had a 20% decline in their cholesterol concentration with a diet consisting of 47 g of soy protein daily. An average overall decline of 9.3% occurred in the cholesterol concentration levels in persons with this soy protein diet.

These results are based on 38

trials with a total of 730 subjects, including adults and children. Subjects were given isolated soy protein or textured soy protein mixed into liquids or solids.

Unlike current cholesterol-lowering drugs, the soy protein *does not* lower the high-density lipoprotein. It does, however, inhibit triglyceride levels.

These results appear to differ from those comments issued in a statement from the Nutrition Committee of the American Heart Association (AHA) in 1993. That statement indicated that soy protein was found to lower cholesterol in rabbits and other laboratory animals but not in humans.

Chairman of that committee Ronald Krauss, MD, said of these latest findings, "The use of soy protein in moderation is entirely consistent with AHA dietary guidelines, but no single report can be conclusive."

Prompt diagnosis of bacterial vaginosis is paramount, given its associated health risks. This theme was resounded at a roundtable discussion held as part of the annual clinical meeting of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, in San Francisco in July.

"One of the most evocative new findings is that bacterial vaginosis is causatively associated with preterm birth and premature rupture of membranes," noted James McGregor, MD, vice chairman and professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Colorado.

Dr McGregor also told meeting attendees that several studies have found a connection between bacterial vaginosis and abnormal Papanicolaou test results, as well as an increased risk of heterosexual transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus.

Panel members emphasized that a simple, already available, diagnostic test and intravaginal as well

as oral treatment agents enable physicians to treat patients promptly and effectively. Yet, diagnosis of bacterial vaginosis still seems to be missed in some instances.

"One of the biggest mistakes I see is people trying to diagnose vaginal infections over the telephone, prescribing medications without examining people," contended Richard Sweet, MD, professor and chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Pittsburgh Magee-Women's Hospital. "It is crucial to make an appropriate diagnosis aimed at the specific vaginal infection."

October is Child Health Month, designated by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Violence prevention is the theme for this year's observance.

With its slogan, *Solutions Before Problems*, the campaign centers on educating parents and the public at-large in teaching children ways to solve problems without resorting to violent behavior. An emphasis is also placed on teaching parents constructive ways to deal with disciplining their children.

"Just trying to decide where to start on the road to reducing violence can seem overwhelming. But, we must remember that walking starts with a single step," notes George D. Comer, MD, AAP president. "Likewise, better, more peaceful interpersonal relationships can start with a small step, such as examination of our own anger management practices, especially when dealing with children."

As part of this effort, various pamphlets and other literature are available from the AAP. Persons interested in acquiring these materials may write to: American Academy of Pediatrics, Division of Publications, 141 Northwest Point Blvd, PO Box 927, Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927, or call (800) 433-9016. ♦