Hormone Withdrawal

Flooding the Brain with Norepinephrine

by Bill Robertson


Sing drugs such as alcohol or heroin markedly affects the uptake of a brain chemical called norepinephrine. The drugs do this by decreasing brain cell receptor activity. Norepinephrine must attach to these receptors to fulfill its function of transmitting nerve messages in the brain. If an 'addicted person' were to stop suddenly taking alcohol or heroin, the brain would be flooded with norepinephrine because of increased receptor cell uptake and synthesis. This results in the familiar withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, insomnia, hot and cold flushes, sweats, loss of appetite, muscle pain and so on.

Similar symptoms occur when ceasing hormones, although with far less intensity. It would seem to follow then, if anyone is considering ceasing hormones that they have been taking for a period of time, that they look at the possibility of a reduction regime as opposed to 'stopping cold' to minimise the effects of doing so.

Kaskin and Kleber, two researchers connected to the Substance Abuse Centre and the Department of Psychiatry at Yale University's School of Medicine, have determined that both testosterone and oestrogen act in the brain as powerful anti-depressants. Major fluctuations of hormone levels either up or down, whether they be oestrogen or testosterone can have the ability to upset the delicate balance of enzyme and other chemical activity in the brain causing depression and other side-effects.

If you plan to undergo neo-vaginal surgery, you will be asked to stop taking hormones four to five weeks prior to the surgery. If you have been compliant with the recommended dosage there is little need for concern in this instance.

Conclusion: Due to the potential of withdrawal symptoms developing when considering hormone cessation, seriously consider all aspects of the decision including the possibility of a reduction regime.

The Gender Centre is committed to providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.