

Effect of hormonal treatment on menopausal symptoms: experience from the Estonian Postmenopausal Hormone Therapy Trial (EPHT) [ISRCTN35338757]

Matti Hakama¹, Piret Veerus², Elina Hemminki³, Sirpa-Liisa Hovi⁴, and Krista Fischer⁴

¹Finnish Cancer Registry

²Tervise Arengu Instituut

³National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)

⁴Affiliation not available

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Abstract

Objective First, to estimate the preventive and the curative effects of postmenopausal hormone therapy (PHT) on menopausal symptoms, and secondly to estimate the sensitivity of a woman to identify the exposure to postmenopausal hormone therapy. **Design** Randomised and blinded trial **Setting** Postmenopausal Hormone Therapy Trial in Estonia (EPHT), 1999-2002 **Participants** 593 women who responded to the relevant questions both at the entry and one-year follow-up questionnaires in the blind sub-trial **Intervention** HT or placebo at entry in women with or without menopausal symptoms **Results** The participants were asked in the questionnaires the presence of the menopausal symptoms of sweating, hot flushes and sleeping disorders, and at one-year follow-up to identify the exposure (HT or placebo). The net curative effect of HT (the proportion of disappeared symptoms in symptomatic women in the HT arm (46.4%) minus the same proportion in the placebo arm (25.8%) was 20.6%. The net preventive effect of HT (the proportion of incident symptoms in asymptomatic women in the placebo arm, 44.4%, minus the same proportion in the HT arm, 14.3%) was 30.1%. At one-year follow-up 34.6% of the women in the HT arm made a right guess on their arm. The net sensitivity of guessing the HT (right guess on HT minus wrong guess on placebo) was 15.8%. **Conclusions** The true HT effect on menopausal symptoms was relatively small. The clinical practice may need to further consider the benefit harm ratio of PHT [ISRCTN35338757].

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