Anti-depressants and hot flashes: Connection isn’t so warm

By ACSH Staff — January 19, 2011

Last week brought word of a study [1] which claimed that the anti-depressant drug known by the trade name Lexapro (escitalopram) could reduce the incidence of hot flashes among menopausal women.

Dr. Ross notes that the study offered less than the headlines suggested. In fact, a placebo did not do all that much worse than the anti-depressant. Where a woman given Lexapro typically saw her number of daily hot flashes fall from 9.8 to 5.26, women given a placebo went from 9.8 hot flashes per day to 6.43. Thus, women on Lexapro only did 18 percent better than women in a control group, although the subjects on the drug noted that their hot flashes were also less intense. However, Lexapro has a variety of common side effects, including constipation, nausea, dizziness, dry mouth and sexual dysfunction.

ACSH’s Dr. Elizabeth Whelan comments, “Women would do better to go to a sensible physician and get hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for a limited time period — a year or two. This is the most effective treatment for the unwanted side-effects of menopause. Fears about the risks of a reasonable course of HRT treatment must be matched to an awareness of the possible benefits.”

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