A Decade of Hormone Replacement Therapy Use: Quantitative and Qualitative
Approaches to Understanding Patient Behaviors

Maureen T. Connelly, MD, MPH
Instructor of Ambulatory Care and Prevention
Harvard Medical School and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care

As new evidence has emerged regarding the risks and benefits of hormone replacement
therapy (HRT) for menopause, patterns of medication adoption and adherence have
changed dramatically. Automated pharmacy data from managed care organizations
provide documentation of trends in medication prescribing. Through linkage to
membership, provider, and ambulatory encounter databases, potential correlates of HRT
use can be identified.   Despite the significant research strengths of administrative
datasets, these data cannot adequately answer questions about the factors that patients
consider when making choices among options for the management of menopause.
Qualitative approaches, including the use of semi-structured interview techniques with
key informants, can complement the analysis of automated data, providing a more
comprehensive understanding of not only 'what' has happened, but also 'why' changes in
medication use occur.

This talk will detail the results of quantitative and qualitative approaches to measuring
patterns of HRT use at Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, the largest non-profit managed care
organization in New England, serving approximately 800,000 patients. Both an
assessment of factors associated with the use of HRT based on administrative data as well
as the development of a patient-centered model of HRT decision making will be
described. The application of hierarchical decision modeling to the prediction of future
use of HRT will be reported.