

MARCH is Endometriosis Awareness Month



en-do-me-tri-o-sis
 \, en-dō-, mē-trē-'ō-səs\

The presence and growth of functioning endometrial tissue in places other than the uterus that often results in severe pain and infertility. © 2007 Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Current Research at Northwestern University

The laboratory research of [Serdar E. Bulun, MD](#) focuses on studying estrogen biosynthesis and metabolism, in particular aromatase expression, in hormone-dependent human diseases such as breast cancer, endometriosis and uterine fibroids.

Aromatase is the key enzyme for estrogen formation in human tissues. Recent research results showed large amounts of aromatase thus estrogen formation in endometriosis. Inhibition of this enzyme in animal models and human disease decreased inflammation and growth in endometriosis and significantly reduced pain associated with endometriosis.

In postmenopausal women, use of an aromatase inhibitor in combination with a bisphosphonate is the treatment of choice in patients

who do not respond to surgical resection. In premenopausal women, aromatase inhibitors are used in combination with an additional drug that suppresses the ovaries because aromatase inhibitor-only treatments may give rise to ovarian stimulation. This additional drug may be a GnRH agonist (eg, Zoladex), progestin (eg, norethindrone acetate) or a birth control pill (eg, Alesse). Currently, some physicians prescribe these regimens to treat premenopausal endometriosis not responding to currently available treatments or in patients who cannot use existing treatments because of their side effects. The majority of these premenopausal patients respond favorably having decreased pelvic disease and reduced pain.

Treatment of endometriosis with aromatase inhibitors is still considered experimental, since there are no current efforts known to the public for obtaining FDA approval for their use in treating endometriosis.

Useful Resources

The Endometriosis Association
<http://www.endometriosisassn.org/>

Global forum for information about Endometriosis
<http://www.endometriosis.org/>

FAQs on Endometriosis for patients
<http://www.4woman.gov/faq/endomet.htm>

Endometriosis interactive tutorial (Patient Education Institute)
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/endometriosis/html/index.htm>

Endometriosis (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/Endometriosis.cfm>

Journal Articles and Patient handouts for Physicians
<http://www.aafp.org/afp/991015ap/1753.html>

Federal, state, and local organizations identify a number of health issues each month to bring to national attention. The Institute will focus on one of these topics each month.

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December