

## Preface

What is androgen insufficiency in women? A conference was held on July 29, 2001, in Princeton, New Jersey, to begin to answer this question. A group of thought leaders in the field was assembled to review the role of androgens in women and debate the definition of androgen insufficiency, its classification, and its assessment.

While it has been assumed that women have lower androgen levels after menopause, this is not necessarily the case. Across the menopausal transition, unbound or free T levels tend to increase; yet when compared with younger premenopausal women, 24-hour mean levels of T are lower. What does this mean?

The approach taken in this conference was to have all the relevant literature reviewed and to have the issues debated; and it was then hoped that a consensus would be reached that would be evidence based. It was acknowledged that in some areas there are insufficient data at the present time to come up with definite conclusions. This is in no small way because the realm of possibilities as to what constitutes androgen insufficiency is large. This spectrum varies from a postmenopausal woman who has undergone bilateral oophorectomy (where there is clear-cut biochemical evidence for a low androgen state) to premenopausal women who may exhibit symptomatology that has been attributed by some to androgen insufficiency. At the end of this conference a general consensus was reached in many areas. These statements may be found within the pages of

this supplement. Also included here are the papers from the scientific presentations, divided into the areas of [1] androgen production and mechanisms; [2] androgen effects on female health; [3] androgen deficiency status and sequelae; and [4] clinical assessment and diagnosis.

One of the important developments of this conference was the opportunity to acknowledge the gaps in our knowledge base and to catalogue important research questions. The consensus statements reflect only our current state of knowledge with the expectations that more data will be forthcoming. It was not the intent of this meeting to discuss possible treatments. This may be a subject for future meetings.

The concept of androgen insufficiency has been controversial but is viewed as potentially having a major impact on the quality and well-being of women's lives. As scientific chairs, we are honored to have participated in this meeting and to help invigorate interest in defining and understanding better this important evolving area of women's health.

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