

Orthopaedic Connection

The Elusive Fountain Of Youth

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

The Spanish explorers never found the Fountain of Youth in Florida in the 1500s. That doesn't mean people have given up trying. The search has taken many forms over the years. This isn't meant to be a history lesson so I won't try to go into all the forms.

At the present time the search has become chemical. The buzz words are "anti-aging" drugs and "performance enhancing" drugs. I am giving you the Orthopaedic Surgeons take on this.

Testosterone

It has been around since it was first synthesized in 1935. It has been used to treat many medical conditions since that time. But in the last 10 years there has been a 500% increase in its prescription use.

Testosterone levels decrease with age in males gradually and progressively. This results in decreased sexual desire, muscle weakness and lower bone mass.

Supplementation can have a positive effect on muscle strength, bone density, sexual function and depression. Some feel it decreases risk of falling.

There are very few side effects associated with its use in an aging population.

The problem is there are terrible side effects in abuse cases usually in younger patients.

Human Growth Hormone

A study was published in 1990 that reported hGH therapy could reverse age related changes in body composition in otherwise healthy elderly men. Its use has increased tremendously over the last 20 years. Abuse of it is present in celebrities, professional athletes and even ordinary people. Endocrinologists are against its use as an anti-aging

drug and in fact its distribution and use for that purpose is illegal in the U.S.

Other studies have shown modest increase in muscle volume, but no increase in strength. It seems to be worthless as a performance enhancer.

It does have numerous bad side effects.

Resveratrol

It is a supplement found in plant derived products and red wine. It may hold some promise to decrease age related decline. But there is a lot of proof we don't have yet to back up claims made for it. Time will tell.

Antioxidants

Antioxidants can decrease cell damage and it is thought, decrease oxidative stress in Alzheimers, diabetes, RA and heart disease. But there is so much we don't understand about how antioxidants affect some of these complex disease processes. High doses are known to be harmful so be careful and be moderate.

Key Point

The marketing of "Fountain of Youth" products has drastically outpaced the science of these products. It's good to be open minded, but skeptical until the science catches up with the marketing.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website

The new all redesigned website also has the Archive of all previous articles I have written for Gratiot County Herald.

Please check out the website www.orthopodsurgeon.com about all the things I treat in the office and hospital.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush

