

Dr. Goldman's Book Reviews

BREAKTHROUGH

EIGHT STEPS TO WELLNESS

Life-altering Secrets from Today's Cutting Edge Doctors

By

Suzanne Somers

Crown Publishers

Here comes Suzanne Somers with her third major book on Bioidentical Hormones and her personal quest for health and vitality. *The Sexy Years* began the journey, followed by *Ageless* and now *Breakthrough*. As with the prior books, *Breakthrough* is a series of interviews with physicians and other medical practitioners she has met along her journey, with small transitional chapters interspersed of Suzanne Somers' opinions. As she repeats multiple times throughout the book, "I'm just a messenger, it's doctors like you who are leading the way."

There is a huge amount of material in this book. I endorse much of what it says. I disagree with some of the theories and practices and only time will tell if some of the therapies suggested are good or bad medicine. It would be impossible in a short book review to make point-by-point comments, but I would concur with the broad message Ms. Somers puts forth.

Here are her eight steps to wellness:

1. Get BHRT (bioidentical hormone replacement therapy)
2. Avoid Chemicals and Detoxify Your Body
3. Take Nutrition Seriously
4. Create a Healthy GI Tract (gastrointestinal tract)
5. Avoid Pharmaceuticals Unless Absolutely Necessary
6. Supplement Your Diet (vitamins, minerals, other supplements)
7. Exercise Regularly
8. Get Proper Sleep

If you read my pamphlets on Holistic Male Health and Holistic Female Health I make most of the same points. Generally, this is a very good summary of Holistic Medicine, Functional Medicine and Anti-aging Medicine. Personally, I am most influenced by the Holistic and Functional Medicine camps. I find that the prominent Anti-aging doctors do therapies that are the furthest from mainstream medicine, are the most expensive and the most profitable.

I would like comment and caution on a few points:

Progesterone therapy:

In *The Sexy Years*, Somers' first hormone book, Dr. Schwarzbein uses progesterone only on a brief cycling basis. In her next book, *Ageless*, T. S. Wiley joined the "it must be cycled" chant. Their pseudo-science reasons are not correct. Because of taking too much estrogen and too little progesterone for too few weeks at a time, Somers ended up with a hysterectomy because of pre-cancer of the uterine lining. She still has this wrong.

Birth Control Pills:

Suzanne Somers has been convinced that her breast cancer was caused by her past use of birth control pills. There is been a great deal of research on the subject and B/C pills appear to have very little if any effect on breast cancer rates. They actually reduce both ovarian and endometrial cancer.

Growth hormone supplements:

I have not added growth hormone to my practice as yet. BHRT is generally within most budgets, even if not covered by insurance. Growth hormone can be \$20,000 to \$40,000 or more per year. In the courses I have taken, it would seem that growth hormone is probably safe and beneficial in appropriate doses but the federal government has been strongly trying to restrict its use. If everyone over 65 used growth hormone, at current prices, it would bankrupt Medicare. If it were the same price as the common sex hormones, I would be very interested.

Intravenous supplements and chelation therapy:

IV therapy of any kind requires strict sterile and purity standards. I would be very cautious about receiving any intravenous treatments by a doctor that just "whipped it up" in his office. There is good literature about IV vitamin C and cancer treatments but the IV preparation itself must be very carefully made.

Diet Soda:

Diet soda and the sugar substitutes raise insulin levels and stimulate hunger, causing weight gain. I don't like them and discourage their use. Suzanne Somers seems to think they are amongst the greatest evils in America but she never states exactly why.

***Life Extension* magazine and A4M:**

The A4M is the organization of the Life Extension movement. In general, I feel that they over-treat patients. They tend to use hormones and supplements in doses that I feel may be too high. They are also quick to employ very new therapies. I, generally, am more cautious than that.

Robert P. Goldman, M.D. February 2009