



## **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 about bioidentical hormones and her personal quest for health and vitality. *The Sexy Years* began the journey, followed by *Ageless* and now *Breakthrough*. As with her 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 with Somers' opinions. 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 but disagree with some of the theories and practices — 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 Somers puts forth.

### **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 gastrointestinal tract
5. Avoid pharmaceuticals unless absolutely necessary
6. Supplement your diet (vitamins, minerals and other supplements)
7. Exercise regularly
8. Get proper sleep

If you read my pamphlets about holistic male and female health, I make most of the same points. Generally, this is a very good summary of holistic, functional and anti-aging medicine. Personally, I am most influenced by the holistic and functional medicine camps. I find that prominent anti-aging doctors, with practices furthest from mainstream medicine, tend to be the most expensive and the most profitable.

## **I would like to comment and caution on a few points:**

### **Progesterone therapy**

In Somers' first hormone book, *The Sexy Years*, 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-scientific reasons are not correct. Because Somers took an excess of estrogen and too little progesterone (in a short timeframe), she ultimately had a hysterectomy — pre-cancer of the uterine lining was detected. She still has this wrong.

### **Birth control pills**

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

### **Growth hormone supplements**

As of yet, I have not added growth hormone to my practice. BHRT is generally within most budgets, even if insurance does not cover it. Growth hormone can run \$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 trying to restrict its use. At current prices, if everyone over age 65 used growth hormone, it would bankrupt Medicare. If it were the same price as common sex hormones, I would be very interested in exploring further.

### **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 treatment that was just "whipped up" in a physician's office. There is good literature about IV Vitamin C and cancer treatments but the IV preparation must be very carefully made.

### **Diet soda**

Diet soda along with sugar substitutes raises insulin levels, stimulating hunger and increasing the likelihood of weight gain. I do not like them and discourage their use. Somers feels they are one of the greatest evils in America, but never states exactly why.

### **Life extension magazine and A4M**

The A4M is the organization of the Life Extension movement. In general, I feel their patients are overtreated and tend to use hormones and supplements in doses that I feel may be too high. Being quick to employ very new therapies with little testing, I generally tend to be more cautious about this approach.

Robert P. Goldman, M.D.