

# Foreword

In a collective expertise procedure, Inserm has assessed the benefits of hormone replacement therapy on the increased cardiovascular risk after the menopause, possibly linked to estrogen deficiency. The following points were submitted to analysis and discussions :

- The precise cardiovascular risk in postmenopausal women. Epidemiologic data on the incidence of cardiovascular disease in women before and after menopause. Epidemiologic data serving as a basis for the indications of hormone replacement therapy in cardiovascular prevention.
- Experimental data supporting the pharmacologic effects of estrogen on the cardiovascular system. The molecular mechanisms linking estrogen to the cardiovascular system. Experimental models to study the physiological effect of estrogen on the cardiovascular system.
- Are all means of HRT administration equivalent, given the molecular action of estrogen on the cardiovascular system ? How can the efficacy of the different preparations, especially oral and transdermal delivery systems, be compared ? Are existing data based on methodologically reliable studies ? What is the optimal treatment period to prevent cardiovascular disease ? Does the length of treatment correlate with specific benefits?
- How to establish the best risk-benefit ratio for estrogen replacement therapy vis-a-vis the risk of venous thrombosis and coagulation disorders, taking into account the dose, the duration of treatment, and the mode of administration?

In order to answer these questions, a multidisciplinary panel of experts was convened by Inserm. This group comprised scientists and specialists in cardiovascular and menopause epidemiology, cell biology, steroid hormones, hemostasis, diabetes, gynecology, hemobiology and a general practitioner. More than 1,000 scientific publications have been selected which cover all the various facets of hormone replacement therapy influence on the cardiovascular risk in postmenopausal women. In this report, each expert presents a critical analysis of the most relevant studies in his or her field. This analysis of epidemiological, biological and clinical data is summarized in seventeen chapters. The synthesis integrates the main points emerging both from the analyses and from the overall critical discussions of the group.