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Preface

Publication of the results of the combined and oestrogen-alone arms of the Women's Health Initiative and the Million Women Study has led to increasing interest in the use of alternatives to hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Women and health professionals are concerned about the controversies surrounding breast cancer and cardiovascular disease risk in association with HRT.

Management of postmenopausal women is now a multidisciplinary public health issue as life expectancy is rising. Menopause management is no longer solely the remit of gynaecologists, but also involves other disciplines, such as general physicians, geriatricians, cardiologists and orthopaedic surgeons as well as general practitioners and nurse specialists. In the UK average female life expectancy is 81 years, which means that women can expect to live for 30 years after the menopause. Currently one-third of women are aged over 50. Increasing longevity results in altered interpersonal relationships and more reliance on women as carers for elderly relatives. This affects current social structures and the need for health service provision. Some conditions associated with older females, such as osteoporotic hip fracture, can lead to permanent disability and loss of independence. It is thus essential to develop a wide range of strategies that can be targeted to individual women and will help them to maintain good health, independence and quality of life throughout their postmenopausal years.

The aim of this book is to provide up-to-date evidence on the role and safety of non-oestrogen based strategies. Experts have written chapters covering many aspects of standard pharmacopoeia and surgical procedures, alternative and complementary therapies, and lifestyle interventions. The chapters are intentionally concise to create an easy to read, 'dip-in' book for the busy health professional dealing with postmenopausal women. The further reading lists, found at the end of each chapter, are a selection of relevant up-to-date publications.

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