

Infertility Drug, Clomid, Boosts Uterine Cancer Risk

“Uterine cancer after use of clomiphene citrate to induce ovulation,”

M. Althuis et al, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, April 1, 2005.

Reviewed by Pat Cody

Although no data was taken as to DES exposure among this group, we’re reporting on this study because many DES daughters have taken Clomid (also known as Serophene) as part of infertility treatments.

These researchers, led by a scientist from the National Cancer Institute, begin their article by pointing out that clomiphene citrate

(Clomid) increases estradiol levels and thus may increase the risk for cancer of the uterus.

They surveyed health data from 8,431 women in the United States who were evaluated for infertility during the 23 years from 1965 to 1988. Through 1999, 39 uterine cancers were reported from this

group. The risk increased with the total Clomid dose and was highest among women who had never been pregnant, and were obese. They also found that risk was greatest for those who first used Clomid 20 or more years ago. The authors com-

group. The risk increased with the total Clomid dose and was highest among women who had never been pregnant, and were obese. They also found that risk was greatest for those who first used Clomid 20 or more years ago. The authors com-

group. The risk increased with the total Clomid dose and was highest among women who had never been pregnant, and were obese. They also found that risk was greatest for those who first used Clomid 20 or more years ago. The authors com-

continued on page 3

Clomid continued from page 1

ment is that:

“The significant latency effect suggests that clomiphene may be an initiator of carcinogenesis and is consistent with the fact that uterine carcinomas are generally slow-growing tumors. Long latency may explain in part why studies that included fewer than 10 years of follow-up failed to find an association between clomiphene use and uterine cancer, underscoring the importance of long-term follow-up of infertility cohorts.”

The report concludes:

“In summary, our study is the first known to suggest that clomiphene increases uterine cancer risk and to demonstrate evidence of both a dose-response and latency effect. Clomiphene did not increase either ovarian or breast cancer risk in this cohort; however, we observed slight elevations in risk for both cancers among women followed for more than 20 years....

“Clomiphene was approved for clinical use in the United States in 1967 and is now one of the most widely used drugs in the management of infertility. By 2025, between 5.4 and 7.7 million U.S. women are projected to seek treatment for infertility annually. It is therefore of mounting public health importance to clarify the relation between clomiphene use and

uterine cancer. Fortunately, uterine cancer is often diagnosed at early stages because of symptoms (see box) and has good survival rates.”

DES Daughters who were prescribed Clomid are urged to have that fact noted on their patient history

form so their health care providers are alert for this cancer.

The risk increased with total Clomid dose and was highest among women who had never been pregnant.

Those who are dealing with infertility should give careful consideration to the risks of using Clomid before starting it.

The decision should be made after consultation with your doctor.