



## **Cumbria Advisory Thyroid Service**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**



#### **MISINFORMATION ON DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT**

There is a great deal of misinformation being spread by alternative medicine groups regarding the diagnosis and treatment of Thyroid dysfunction. The internet is a wonderful medium for gaining access to information on many medical conditions, however, C.A.T.S. always warn patients to be careful as many sites are not reputable and do give out false information.

Many of these sites support the idea that the TSH blood test is not necessary and Thyroid diagnosis should be made by taking the patients temperature first things in the morning over a period of days. If the temperature is on the low side you are hyperthyroid (and some thyroid patients have a lower than normal temperature reading even when the patient is on Thyroid medication.) so it is difficult to see how the correct dosage could be worked out using this method.

The TSH blood test is a very sensitive test which measures Thyroid Stimulating Hormones. The levels of these hormones are finely balanced with your Thyroid producing T3 & T4. If the levels of the T3 & T4 drop, the pituitary gland then produces more TSH in an effort to stimulate the Thyroid to produce more Thyroid hormone. If too much T3 & T4 is produced then the pituitary halts production of TSH in an effort to get the Thyroid balanced again. C.A.T.S. recognise there are sometimes reasons why patients do get a TSH reading that does not give the true picture of the state of their Thyroid. Virus infections and certain illnesses can alter the levels slightly as well as certain medications and over the counter remedies. C.A.T.S. advice to patients, if you are unsure about anything, is to contact your G.P. and explain what you think is wrong. Most doctors are willing to re-run the tests again (usually leaving a gap of 6-8 weeks before doing one.) Always remember there are other illnesses that can give Thyroid symptoms so it is important to get your G.P. to run tests for other health conditions and not just Thyroid symptoms as it may not be your Thyroid to blame.

Alternative medicine groups also promote natural preparations such as natural desiccated Thyroid hormone (amour extract) obtained from pigs and available in America. Thyroid patients treated in Britain are given Thyroxine for under-active Thyroids. The synthetic Thyroid hormone preparation has to conform to strict medical guidelines and as such is regulated by the British Drugs Industry. The amour extract however has no such rules governing its production and consequently the extract varies from batch to batch. Patients have to be monitored very carefully. It has been noted this extract can alter your T3 levels. Amour contains extract of T3 & T4 together. In Britain T3 & T4 are taken separately as patients do not require extra T3. Following research, some G.P.'s in Britain are now doing trial with patients using amour extract. These trials are only in the very early stages but as yet no evidence has been shown that patients are better when taking the natural amour extract. C.A.T.S. feel that until there is more evidence to support this trial it is safer to take the traditional treatment such as Thyroxine.

Some alternative medical groups state that taking Thyroxine is dangerous and no-one know the effect of taking the synthetic hormone long term. C.A.T.S. can say that Thyroxine is perfectly safe as long as you are taking the correct dose (hence the reason for regular blood tests). If however you are on an incorrect dose you will run the risk of developing more serious health problems. As for taking Thyroxine on a long term basis, there is no foreseeable danger as one C.A.T.S. member has been taking Thyroxine for over 60 years and is perfectly well.

#### **C.A.T.S RECOMMENDS YOU ALWAYS SEEK YOUR DOCTORS ADVICE**

#### **Disclaimer**

***The purpose of this information leaflet is to help those suffering with thyroid disease. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, it is impossible to ensure that the information given is relevant to every individual. No responsibility is accepted by CATS and it is recommended and essential, that if in any doubt about your condition, that you should always contact your doctor, specialist physician or surgeon to seek medical advice***