

the **WATCH**

A Multi-Faceted Approach to Managing the Aging Process

By Karen James

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TELLURIDE – Although Judith A. Ingalls, M.D., estimated she delivered about 300 babies during her tenure as medical director of the Telluride Medical Center from 1981 to 1989, as a medical consultant she now targets a very different, but no less landmark time in a woman's life – menopause.

“[Women] are unprepared for the aging process and it escalates when you lose your estrogen,” Ingalls said. “There's a feeling like, ‘What the heck is happening to me?’” as women begin experiencing a host of symptoms that can include hot flashes, insomnia, mood swings, muscle loss, and bone loss, among others. Based on her own experiences, Ingalls understands the sentiment well. So much so that it ultimately led her to specialize in the prevention and anti-aging medicine that she believes are integral to managing menopause.

Despite being a practicing family physician when she experienced menopause herself, “It was one of those things I wasn't prepared for,” she said.

As a result, she began learning as much as she could about menopause and eventually became a North American Menopause Society Certified Menopause Practitioner. Since a board-certified medical specialization in menopause does not yet exist, the NAMS certification is one way to know that a healthcare provider has advanced competency in the area, Ingalls explained.

At the time Ingalls had a successful menopause consulting practice, which she still maintains in, Carefree, Ariz., but Telluride beckoned to her in August 2006. It was then when she and her husband, Jack Thompson, joined by their son, Matt, felt they wanted to reconnect with a small town, she said.

Although she didn't expect to continue her menopause practice here, she encountered high demand.

“I kept running into women whose babies I delivered who are now going through menopause and they wanted me to help them,” she explained.

Thus a new practice was born, but one Ingalls quickly emphasized is meant to complement, not substitute, primary care.

“I work closely with your primary care physician in town, not instead of,” she explained.

Clients can expect to spend up to two hours with Ingalls during initial consultations because of her comprehensive approach. During that time she conducts a general health and wellness appraisal as well as sexual health, bone health, breast health, heart health, emotional health, and nutritional health assessments.

“One of the best ways to prevent aging is by proper nutrition,” Ingalls said, demonstrating her holistic view. As a result, she may recommend her clients take supplements, particularly those rich in anti-oxidants, to slow down the process.

Another service Ingalls provides is to a hormone health assessment and balancing plan, if necessary. This is achieved by taking blood samples to determine the client’s levels of sex and adrenal hormones.

Ingalls will also customize a hormone replacement plan for clients she believes will benefit. Rather than prescribing the synthetic hormones of yesteryear, however, she prefers bioidentical hormones. These plant-derived substances are chemically identical to those produced in our bodies, but typically come from soy or yams, she said.

Different than over-the-counter, synthetic hormones, which Ingalls described as “one size fits all,” bioidentical hormones can be custom mixed for each woman by a compound pharmacist. They are also available through regular pharmacies.

“With bioidentical hormones I can ensure I’m giving the least amount that gives the best benefit in relieving symptoms,” she said.

Men do not experience a dramatic decrease in hormones like menopausal women do. Instead, when men age they lose testosterone gradually. As a result they may experience symptoms including fatigue, loss of muscle mass, loss of libido, and decreased sexual function. As such, they may also benefit from bioidentical hormone replacement, according to Ingalls. And since both men and women benefit from prevention, her practice is open to both.

“I don’t just deal with menopause, but prevention in terms of health,” she said, adding that she believes her previous experience in family practice has given her special ability to tie together disparate health concerns into one cohesive picture.

“My experience in primary care is what I’m finding is giving me the expertise to back up everything I offer in prevention,” she said.

For more information visit www.drjudithingalls.com or call 970/708-9588.