

**\*\*For Immediate Release\*\***

*From Women and Health Protection and the Canadian Women's Health Network:*

**“Miracle Pills” for Disease Prevention an Alarming Trend,  
Researcher Finds**

Drugs promoted to maintain health can cause disease instead.

A new study calls on the federal government to tighten regulations on drugs being tested and prescribed to prevent disease. “Current policies encourage a strategy of disease substitution, with toxic pills that can do as much harm as good,” says Prof. Sharon Batt, the study’s author.

“We have two recent, dramatic examples of drugs given to women to prevent disease which actually cause life-threatening conditions,” says Prof. Batt, who holds the Elizabeth May Chair of Women’s Health and the Environment at Dalhousie University. The hormone combination estrogen/progestin, marketed for over two decades to mid-life women to prevent diseases of aging, was recently shown to increase the risk of both heart disease and breast cancer. Tamoxifen, a drug used to prevent breast cancer, reduces the risk of this disease but causes blood clots, endometrial cancer and cataracts.

At the same time that research to develop expensive “miracle pills” is being avidly pursued, traditional public health safeguards -- such as clean air and water, safe food and drugs, adequate housing and workplace safety -- are quietly eroding, says the report.

Current policies assume that health risks are to be managed rather than reduced or eliminated. “The federal government’s risk management framework actually favours drugs over these proven strategies for protecting health,” says Prof. Batt. “The first rule of disease prevention is to put safety first, and that means before trade and profits.”

“The findings of this study are consistent with other research we’ve sponsored,” says Anne Rochon Ford of Women and Health Protection, which commissioned the study. “We need health protection legislation that ensures the safety of drugs and drug trials, enforcement of the ban on prescription drug ads and a health regulatory system that’s independent of industry.”

The report was funded by the Women’s Health Bureau, Health Canada and prepared by the Women and Health Protection Working Group.

To see the complete document, *Preventing Disease: Are Pills the Answer?* visit: <http://www.whp-apsf.ca>

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