

The medicalization of healthy womanhood

Michael A Weingarten¹

¹ Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Western medicine has recommended healthy children to take routine supplements – vitamins A + D, iron, and fluoride. Now healthy women too are categorized as requiring routine pharmacological support – sex hormones for contraception and in menopause, folic acid and iron before and during pregnancy, and calcium and biphosphonates in old age. This is a remarkable exercise in the medicalization of healthy lives. By virtue of being female, the body seems to require constant help even when healthy. These recommended preventive medicine protocols, if followed religiously, make pill taking a routine part of life for a woman from birth to death. Although each and every element in these preventive protocols can be justified individually, the total end result is counterintuitive. Normal biological life should not require constant pharmacological support. The fact that it is women in particular who are singled out as being deficient demands a reappraisal of the social, political and commercial interests that might benefit from subjugating that half of the population to a life of monitored medical prescription. In this presentation I will suggest some candidate interests.