Rationale for this thesis and research questions
The general and main research question was:

What are the effects of classical hormone therapy (oestrogen and progestagen) and specifically tibolone on sexual function in postmenopausal women with Female Sexual Dysfunction (FSD).

To address this general question several considerations were explored before identifying the approach to conduct this project as the female sexual response cycle is vulnerable and reflects an entity which is highly complex and dependent of many factors, hormones most likely being only a small part of the puzzle. The aim of our study was to contribute to the current knowledge about the role of hormone therapy in female sexual function and to search for pharmacological treatment options which could fit in a multi-dimensional, but also clinically practical approach in the treatment of sexual problems.

In order to provide the necessary material for designing the FSD study and to answer our main research question, we defined sub-research questions as follows:

1. What are the attitudes of postmenopausal women and doctors regarding sexuality after menopause?
2. What is the correct research approach in investigating pharmacological intervention for FSD?
3. What are the effects of tibolone, combined oestrogen plus progestagen and raloxifene (a selective oestrogen receptor modulator) in sexual function in postmenopausal women?
4. What is the net androgenic effect of tibolone over and above its oestrogenic effects in postmenopausal women with FSD?

Outline

Chapter 4 identifies and describes current women’s thoughts about sexuality after menopause in various European countries and identifies current physicians attitudes towards sexuality during and after the menopause.

Chapter 5 reviews the current knowledge about pharmaceutical intervention studies in FSD and addresses the limitations and issues in the study of FSD with regard to design and outcome measures.

Chapter 6 determines the effects of tibolone and raloxifene on health-related quality of life, sexual function and vaginal atrophy in elderly postmenopausal women.

Chapter 7 determines the effects of tibolone and low dose E₂/NETA on sexual function, urogenital complaints and quality of life in younger postmenopausal women.
Chapter 8 compares the efficacy on sexual function of tibolone versus continuous combined transdermal E₂/NETA in naturally postmenopausal women with sexual dysfunction.

Chapter 9 addresses tolerability issues of tibolone and transdermal E₂/NETA for treating FSD.

Chapter 10 aims to contribute to the current research area of FSD and presents explorative analyses of the pharmaceutical intervention study in women with FSD.

Chapter 11 presents the general discussion about the findings in our studies and integrates the results into clinical practice.
References

28. Center for Disease control and Prevention. Life expectancy hits record high. Atlanta GA. 2005


