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Seham A Helmy ^{1*}, Hanan A Emarah ² and Heba M. A. Abdelrazek ³

¹Department of Cytology and Histology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Suez Canal University, Egypt

²Faculty of Nursing, Zagazig University, Egypt

³Department of Physiology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Suez Canal University, Egypt

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an alternative or complement of hormonal replacement therapy (HRT) in postmenopausal women [18,19] especially in cases of long-term administration [18]. The effect of isoflavones depends on the level of endogenous estradiol, since isoflavones and estradiol are competing for their binding on ERs. In a state of high levels of endogenous estrogens as in the follicular phase of the estrous cycle, isoflavones may obstruct full estrogen activity by occupying a part of ERs. On the other hand, in a state with low levels of endogenous estrogens after ovariectomy or menopause, the estrogen activity of isoflavones may become manifest [20-22].

Responses of the reproductive tract of ovariectomized rodents, which include changes in gene expression, cellular hypertrophy and DNA synthesis, and vascular changes, have been used extensively to evaluate test compounds for estrogenic activity. Regulation of vascular permeability and blood vessel growth in mammalian female reproductive tract are associated with changes in gene expression of several angiogenic factors, including vascular endothelial growth

Estrogen action is exerted in target tissues via binding to one of the two estradiol receptors (ER or ER) each of which is encoded by unique genes. Estradiol receptors act as dimers to regulate transcriptional activation [56].

The present study demonstrates that the expression of VEGF, an endothelial cell-specific mitogen and permeability factor, in myometrium, perimetrium and perivascular area was increased significantly ($P < 0.05$) in soy phytoestrogens fed group (G2) than control (G1). This effect was associated with an increase in uterine vasculature with presence of newly formed blood vessels in G2. These findings agree with previous results of Ikeda et al. [70] and Mosquette et al. [71] who investigated the positive effect of phytoestrogens on VEGF and

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phytoestrogens as a replacement for traditional estrogen replacement therapy.
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