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Original Research Article

Study to assess knowledge, attitude and practice regarding menopause among menopausal women attending outdoor in tertiary care centre

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ABSTRACT

Background: India is a developing country and it is growing rapidly in all aspects of life. Health status of population has improved and hence the life expectancy. Women are affected positively by this improvement and their life expectancy has become longer than men. Women all over the world now have to spend almost 1/3rd of their lives in menopausal years. Therefore, menopause now is a concerning matter to maintain and improve women's health.

Methods: This analytical study was conducted for a period of 1 year in postmenopausal women attending outdoor in Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Sultania Zanana Hospital, Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India. The instrument used in this study was structured questionnaire consisting of 19 items in Hindi language, developed on the basis of the objective of the study.

Results: In the present study, 32.72% of menopausal women had knowledge of menopausal symptoms. 39.09%, 52.72% and 22.72% knew that menopause increases risk of cardiovascular, osteoporosis and breast cancer respectively. 28.18% think menopausal women should consult a physician, only 4.54% of menopausal women are aware of HT. 64.55% of menopausal women perceive menopause as loss of youth. 67.28% think menopausal psychological symptoms affect quality of life. 57.28% think that menopause means end of sexual life. 30% think that menopause is associated with maturity and experience. 46.27% think that absence of menstruation in the postmenopausal period is a relief. 39.10% think physical changes of menopause are inevitable and hence acceptable. 29.09% had consulted a physician at the onset of menopause.

Conclusions: Our study shows that majority of women have a negative outlook towards menopause considering as a loss of youth and higher susceptibility towards health problems. This shows that the awareness towards menopause should be increased by IEC (information, education, and counseling), so as to help these women to live their postmenopausal years more healthy and active.

Keywords: Attitude, Knowledge, Menopause

INTRODUCTION

India is a developing country and it is growing rapidly in all aspects of life. Health status of population has improved and hence the life expectancy.

Women are affected positively by this improvement and their life expectancy has become longer than men. Women all over the world now have to spend almost

1/3rd of their lives in menopausal years. Therefore, menopause now is a concerning matter to maintain and improve women's health.

Menopause is an inevitable milestone in the lifetime of every woman. Technically it is the permanent cessation of menses. By convention the diagnosis of menopause is not made until the individual has had 12 months of amenorrhoea. Menopause is not just the cessation of

menstruation, it is the ‘depletion of ovarian follicles’ leading to decrease in ovarian hormones.

Menopause happens in the critical period of women’s life when there is a lot of social transition and it coincides with the ‘Empty nest syndrome’, when children leave home and women find themselves alone with increased incidence of psychosomatic symptoms.

Indeed, at this stage of life both men and women express a multitude of complaints that do not reveal a gender difference that could be explained by a hormonal cause.¹

Every women’s experience of menopause is unique. She may experience all of the symptoms or none of them. Some women find the transition barely noticeable while others find it life altering. The idea of managing menopause by hormone therapy (HT) is becoming preferable to ameliorate the recent complaints of

menopause and to prevent its medical sequelae. The study is an attempt to identify the level of knowledge about menopause, occurrences of problems related to menopause and their health care seeking pattern so that a more culturally focused, relevant, education plan as a health promotion intervention can be taken up.

METHODS

This analytical study was conducted for a period of 1 year at, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Sultania Zanana Hospital, Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal after taking institutional ethical clearance. All menopausal women as specified by the definition - individual who has had amenorrhoea of 12 months or more (identified by medical history) including women with surgical menopause, attending outpatient clinic in Sultania Zanana Hospital, Bhopal were selected after their informed consent.

Table 1: Each correct response will get 1 mark and incorrect one will get 0 mark.

Questions	Yes	No
A. Knowledge regarding menopause		
Do you have knowledge of menopausal symptoms?		
Do you know menopause increases risk of cardio vascular disease?		
Do you know menopause increase risk of osteoporosis?		
Do you know menopause increase risk of breast cancer?		
Do you think post-menopausal bleeding is abnormal?		
Do you think indulging in recreational activities and physical exercises are beneficial practices?		
Do you think menopausal women should consult a physician?		
Are you aware of hormone therapy?		
B. Attitude		
Do you perceive menopause as loss of youth		
Do you think menopausal psychological symptoms affect quality of life?		
Do you think menopause means end of sexual life?		
Do you think menopause is associated with maturity and experience?		
Do you think absence of menstruation in the post-menopausal period is a relief?		
Do you think physical changes of menopause are inevitable and hence acceptable?		
C. Practices at menopause		
Did you consult a physician at the onset of menopause?		
Have you shown compliance with treatment / advices?		
Have you undergone any physical examination / investigation at the onset of menopause?		
Have you adopted favourable practices in post-menopausal years?		
Did you discuss menopausal symptoms with others?		

The instrument used in this study was structured questionnaire consisting of 19 items in Hindi language, developed on the basis of the objective of the study. The questionnaire was initially pre-tested on a small number of menopausal women to identify any difficulty in understanding by the respondents. Verbal consent was taken from every participant. Each correct response had a score of 1(one) and an incorrect a score of 0 (zero). Total

KAP score was summed up for each participant (Table 1).

Table 2: Used for KAP scoring of participant.

Poor score	0-4	0-25%
Average score	5-9	26-50%
Good score	10-14	51-75%
Excellent score	15-19	76-100%

After collection of data, it was tabulated using the electronic spread sheet. Statistical calculation and subsequently analysis was made by the computer software (Epi Info Version 7). Result has been presented in the form of tables and graphs.

RESULTS

Among all the menopausal women interviewed maximum (57.27%) were in the age group 56-65 years. The youngest was of 42 years age and the eldest 68 years old (Figure 1).

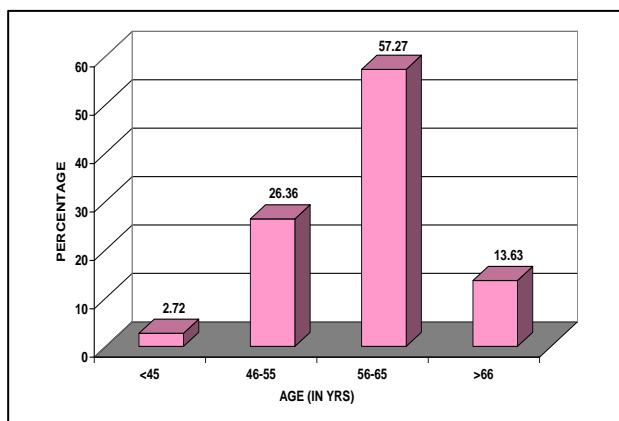


Figure 1: Age wise distribution of post-menopausal women in present study.

Majority of cases i.e. 55.45% were illiterate, 29.09% were educated up to primary school and only 1.82% were graduates.

Majority (59.72%) of the menopausal women belongs to modified Prasad’s social class V (Poor), followed by 24.55% belonging to social class IV (lower middle). None of the participant could be categorized into high or upper high social class.

In the present study, 32.72% of menopausal women had knowledge of menopausal symptoms. 39.09%, 52.72% and 22.72% knew that menopause increases risk of cardiovascular, osteoporosis and breast cancer respectively. 16.36% believe that post-menopausal bleeding is abnormal. 58.18% think that indulging in recreational activities and physical exercises are beneficial practices.

28.18% think menopausal women should consult a physician, only 4.54% of menopausal women are aware of HT. 64.55% of menopausal women perceive menopause as loss of youth. 67.28% think menopausal psychological symptoms affect quality of life. 57.28% think that menopause means end of sexual life. 30% think that menopause is associated with maturity and experience. 46.27% think that absence of menstruation in the post-menopausal period is a relief. 39.10% think physical changes of menopause are inevitable and hence

acceptable. 29.09% had consulted a physician at the onset of menopause, of which 24.54% had shown compliance with treatment/advices. 21.82% have undergone any physical examination / investigation at the onset of menopause. 34.54% have adopted favourable practices in post-menopausal years. 43.63% discuss menopausal symptoms with others (Figure 2, 3).

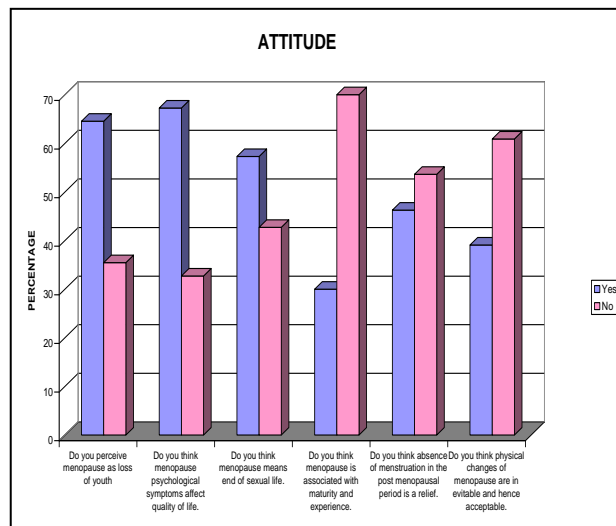


Figure 2: Attitude of women towards menopause.

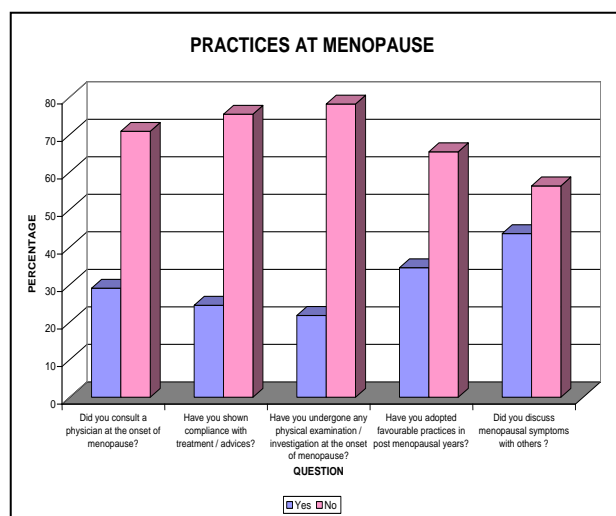


Figure 3: Various practice adopted by postmenopausal women regarding their health issues.

Table 3: KAP scoring of post-menopausal women in present study.

Score of KAP	Number	Percentage
Poor	156	10.91
Average	1009	70.56
Good	260	18.18
Excellent	5	0.35
Total	1430	100

In the present study 70.56% of the menopausal women had average score of KAP followed by 18.18% who had good score, 10.91% had poor score and only 0.35% had scored excellent (Table 3).

The study reflects that amongst the poor scorers 91.68% were illiterate. Out of all women educated up to primary school maximum i.e. 78.12% had scored average. Among the respondents who had high school education and who were graduate's maximum i.e. 89% and 88.4% had scored good respectively. 60% of the excellent scores were graduates.

Amongst the poor scorers 92.9% were housewives and amongst the skilled workers and the professionals 90.4% and 80.7% had scored good respectively. All the professionals have scored excellent. 92.3% of the poor scorers had a monthly per capita income of <1499 Rs. (belonged to poor social class of modified Prasad's classification). In contrast 80% of the excellent scorers belonged to high social class (monthly per capita income in the range 3000-4999 Rs.).

Amongst the poor scorers 75% of women were Muslim.

In the present study 91.6% of the poor scorers and 73.8% of the average scorers belonged to rural places respectively. In contrast 96.5% of the good scorers and all the excellent scorers came from the urban communities.

DISCUSSION

With the increase in life expectancy from 49 years in 1970 to 65 years in 2010 Indian women are spending a larger share of their lives in menopausal period.¹ Therefore they should be armed with knowledge about menopause and its treatment options keeping in mind quality of life issues.

A study conducted by Nahid Yasmin et al reported that majority of the respondents (63.5%) were of age 45-50 years.^{2,3} In a similar study conducted by Vinker S et al the mean age of the respondents was 60.4 years. As per the present study 57.27% of menopausal women belonged to the age group 56-65 years. In a study by Malik HS the mean age of menopausal women being questioned was 55 years.⁴

Our study shows that the majority were illiterate (55.45%), 29.09% were educated up to primary school. 7.27% and 6.36% were educated up to middle and higher secondary school and only 1.82% were graduates.

Yasmin N et al in her study reported that 60.5% of women had no formal education, 26.8% had primary education and only 0.5% had university education. Similar findings were obtained by Lautfy et al in which 78.90% of respondents were uneducated.⁵ Humaira Saeed Malik also found maximum 60.8% with no formal

education. Present study shows that the majority (59.72%) of the menopausal women belonged to modified Prasad's socioeconomic class V (poor), followed by 24.55% belonging to class IV (lower middle). None of the participant could be categorized into high or upper high socioeconomic class. This is consistent with the previous data obtained in the study of Malik HS where 75.5% belonged to poor socio-economic class. In contrary to the study conducted by Yasmin N et al where the maximum respondents (42.4%) belonged to upper middle class.

The main source of information for the menopausal women in our study was friends and family members. The second influential role was played by mass media accounting for 25.45% and the health professionals contribute only 2.73% to it. Similar results have been found in interviews of African - American and Caucasian women by Pham, Fretman and Grisso who chose family members as the most frequently chosen source of menopausal information, while the main source of menopause information for the respondents in the study by Thomas SE et al was books (40%) followed by physicians (24%).⁶ Similarly Netherlands and Australia women received their information about menopause mainly from reading materials and TV program. Also, in a study conducted by Pan HA, Wu MH et al, the most commonly indicated source of knowledge on the menopause has reading materials such as newspapers and magazine accounting for 43%.⁷ This can be explained by the difference in education level of women in

In the present study 32.72% of the women had prior knowledge of menopausal symptoms. Similarly, in study by Loutfy et al 38.4% of women had a previous knowledge of menopausal symptoms. Also in a study conducted by Yasmin N et al 27.8% of the respondents had knowledge of menopause related symptoms. In contrast in a study conducted by Nusrat N, Nishat Z et al only 15.8% of women knew about menopausal symptomatology.⁸

In the present study 39.09% of women knew that menopause increases risk of cardiovascular disease. Similarly, in a study conducted by Thomas SE 25% of respondents recognized cardiovascular disease as an associated risk.

In the present study majority, i.e. 62.29% of women had a negative attitude on menopause and the rest 37.71% a positive one. In a study conducted by Malik HS, majority of women expressed either a positive (47%) or a neutral (39.2%) attitude towards menopause signaling freedom from cyclical bleeding and independence. This finding is similar to the findings of other studies.^{9,10}

Another survey carried out with an aim of understanding views and values of Asian women of Indian Origin in UK related to menopause and HT, of all the women surveyed, 33% felt happy and 46% felt afraid of menopause.¹¹

In the present study 64.55% women perceived menopause as loss of youth. Likewise, in a study by Osarenren N et al 83% of the respondents consider menopause as an unpleasant experience and 69% conclude that every woman is depressed about menopause.¹² 57.28% of women in our study considered menopause as an end of sexual life. On contrary in a study conducted by Elisabeth Stadbery et al 60% women had a regular sex life after menopause.¹²

In this study 46.27% of women believe that absence of menstruation in the postmenopausal period is a relief. In contrast in a study by Nusrat N and Nishat Z et al 83.42% of women were happy about cessation of menses and they did not want to have menses again.

39.10% of women in our study think that physical changes of menopause are inevitable and hence acceptable. In contrast in a study by Osarenren N et al, 87.6% women have said that menopause is one of the biggest changes that happens in a women's life.

In the present study 52.72% of women were aware that menopause increases risk of osteoporosis. In contrast in a study conducted by Thomas SE, 81% of women recognized osteoporosis as a major health risk associated with menopause. Also, according to the results attained by Juby AG and Davis P 93.4% of women were aware of osteoporosis in their menopause. As per present study 22.72% of women knew that menopause increases risk of Breast Cancer. Similarly, in a study conducted by Thomas SE 20% of women were aware that menopause increases risk of breast cancer.

In the present study 16.36% of women considered postmenopausal bleeding as abnormal. In present study 58.18% of women were aware that indulging in recreational activities and physical exercises are beneficial practices. In a study by Loutfy et al 91.1% of women were aware of beneficial practices after menopause.

In the present study 28.18% of women thought that menopausal women should consult a physician. Likewise, in a study conducted by Loutfy et al 12.2% of women were aware that menopausal women should consult a doctor. In contrast in a study by Osarenren N et al 91% of the respondents indicated that a woman should see a doctor at menopause.

In the present study only 4.54% of menopausal women were aware of hormone therapy. Similarly, in a study conducted by Loutfy et al only 9.3% of respondents were aware about HT. Likewise according to a study conducted in Mauritius, 85.5% of women had never heard of HT and of the 14.5% who said that they had heard about it, over 30% said that they had no idea what it was.¹⁰ Lack of awareness regarding HT could be partly attributed to the considerable variation in attitudes towards HT among physicians. One extreme is the view

that HT is the universal remedy for almost all postmenopausal women. The other being that HT is unnecessary for the majority of women and may even be harmful.¹³

29.09% of women in our study have consulted a physician at the onset of menopause, of which 24.54% have shown compliance with treatment and advices. This is comparable to other studies. In a study by Loutfy et al only 11.1% of women had consulted a physician. Similarly, in a study by Nusrat N and Nishat Z et al, 31.86% of women had sought a doctor. Likewise, in a study by Thomas SE 52% of women had neither sought treatment nor followed the prescribed treatment. Many viewed the symptoms of menopause as 'normal' or 'something all women go through'. They believed that the symptoms would pass without treatment and are not unduly perturbed by menopausal discomfort (Kawfert, Boggs, Ettinger, Fugate - Woods and Utian). Barriers to seeking treatment for symptoms of Menopause included the unsympathetic nature of men in general Pham et al.

21.82% of women have undergone any physical examination or investigation at the onset of menopause. This finding is consistent with the result of the study by Thomas SE in which 17% reported been given a physical examination. In contrast in a study by Vinker S et al 60% of the women underwent annual mammography, 74% regular pap smears and lipid profile examination.

As per the present study 34.54% of women have adopted favourable practices in postmenopausal years. Similarly, in a study by Loutfy et al 86% of women were indulged in mild to moderate physical activities during the years preceding menopause.

43.63% of women in our study have discussed menopausal symptoms with others. Similarly, in a study by Loutfy et al 69.8% of women had discussed menopausal symptoms with others. This may be due to their education status (mostly illiterate) or due to close social relationships.

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Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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