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Original Research Article

Knowledge, attitude and practices about menopause and menopausal symptoms among midlife school teachers

Shabana Sultan, Amita Sharma*, Nitin Kumar Jain

Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Gandhi Medical College, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India

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***Correspondence:**

Dr. Amita Sharma,

E-mail: dramita99@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study is aimed towards women's knowledge and attitudes towards menopause as menopause brings multifaceted impact including psychomotor, vasomotor and cardiovascular changes on women's health.

Methods: The population of interest consisted of 150 qualified teachers of age group 40 to 60 years and above from different colleges and schools of Bhopal city. The data was collected using predesigned questionnaire with informed consent and responses were analysed using simple percentages.

Results: In this study, mean age of menopause is 48.4 years and 92% of women had knowledge about menopause out of them 84% of women consider it to be a natural process. Working capacity of 66% of the women was affected while sexual life is affected in 56% of the women. 88% of the women were aware of hormonal replacement therapy but only 4.6% of women were taking HRT due to concerns regarding side effects.

Conclusions: Most of the women in our study are aware of menopause and its symptoms but they are not following healthy life style modifications. Increased awareness is required to prepare women for menopause.

Keywords: Attitude, Knowledge, Menopause, Practices

INTRODUCTION

Menopause is an important physiological change in woman's life. World Health Organization (WHO) has defined post-menopausal women as those women who have stopped menstrual bleeding one year ago or stopped having periods as a result of medical or surgical intervention (Hysterectomy/Oophorectomy) or both. With increasing life expectancy, women spend 1/3rd of life in this phase.¹ It is estimated that by the end of 2015 there will be 130 million elderly women in India, necessitating substantial amount of care.²

Women during the menopause period experience certain physical and psychological changes and face various problems such as urogenital, psychological-social, cardiovascular and neurological problems, etc.^{3,4}

These problems not only cause great distress and disability for the person but also impose a lot of pressure on the limited resources of the countries' health care system.⁵

Middle-aged women's health has been underscored as their social status and the standard of living has improved along with growth of the population of women, which was relatively faster than that of men population. Women in the transition from midlife to elder status are more likely to undergo various and complex health problems, and to draw medical attention due to an increased risk of lowered quality of elderly life caused by inappropriate management.⁶

Menopause is an unspoken, unattended, reality of life, the cause of which is still undeciphered completely by man.

Menopause is one such midlife stage which might be overcome easily or make a lady miserable depending on her luck. This phase of life is shrouded with lots of myths and taboos.⁷

Menopausal symptoms, though well tolerated by some women, may be particularly troublesome in others. Severe symptoms compromise overall quality of life for those experiencing them. There is under-reporting of symptoms among Indian women due to socio cultural factors. According to literature, at least 60% of ladies suffer from mild symptoms and 20% suffer severe symptoms and 20% from no symptoms.⁸ The most common and severe symptoms are memory loss, recurrent fatigue, exhaustion and dry skin in Korean women at menopause period. The menopausal women showed significantly higher physical symptoms than perimenopausal women.⁹

Appropriate understanding of women that certain physical, mental, social and psychological changes occur during menopause helps them with greater readiness to cope with these changes.¹⁰

Overall subjective experience of menopause was perceived as increasingly positive with age. Awareness of menopausal symptoms appeared lower than expected. Peri-menopausal and menopausal women rarely sought medical care.¹¹

Objective of present study was to assess the knowledge and attitude of menopause and menopausal symptoms, to assess perceived effect of menopause on femininity and description of feeling about attaining menopause and to study the common health practices in them following menopause.

METHODS

The study was conducted after taking required permission from the school and college authorities. This was a cross-sectional observational study. This study included 150 female teachers of age group 40 to 60 years and above from different colleges and schools of Bhopal city.

Inclusion criteria

Female teachers in age group 40-60 years and above.

Exclusion criteria

- Women with serious systemic or local disease.
- Women with unnatural menopause.
- Women on any drug therapy.

A Self designed structured questionnaire was prepared addressing demographic features, age of menopause, knowledge and prevalence of menopausal symptoms, perception towards menopause and knowledge and attitude towards HRT and its uses. The questionnaire was

provided to teachers those want to participate in the study. Informed consent was taken from teachers. Those teachers who required therapy were offered treatment.

Statistical analysis

The data obtained was coded, checked and analysed statistically by simple percentages and proportions.

RESULTS

In present study 150 teachers participated. We found that 58% (87 out of 150) women have already attended menopause. Majority of women were in age group 46 to 50 years (42%). Mean age of menopause is 48.4 years.

Table 1: Age wise distribution.

Age group	Number	Percentage
41 to 45 years	21	14
46 to 50 years	63	42
51 to 55 years	59	39
>55 years	7	5

Most women (81%) included in the study were 46-55 years old, 5% women were more than 55 years old and 14% were in 41-45 years age group.

Table 2: Distribution according to marital status.

Marital status	Number	Percentage
Married	117	78
Unmarried	9	6
Divorcee	6	4
Widow	18	12

Out of 150 women included in study 117 (78%) were married, 18 (4%) were widow, 9 (6%) were unmarried and 6 (4%) were divorcee.

Table 3: Distribution according to educational status.

Education	Number	Percentage
PhD	102	68
B. Ed	9	6
M. A.	6	4
B. A.	18	12

All women included in the study had received higher education. Out of which 68% were Ph.D.

Table 4: Distribution according to parity.

Parity	Number	Percentage
1	21	14
2	105	70
3	18	12
4	6	4

Most (70%) women were second para while 14% had only one child, 12% were third para and 4% had 4 children.

Table 5: Source of information.

Source	Number	Percentage
Friends/Relatives	93	62
Tv/Radio	24	16
Doctor	15	10
Magazine	3	2
Others	15	10

92% of the participants had knowledge about menopause. 84% of them considered it to be a natural process while rest believed it to be a disease.

Most of them (62%) received information about menopause/HRT from Friends and relatives. Television and radio has important role to spread such valuable information. 16 % women received information from this media. Only 10 % women consult with doctor.

Table 6: Awareness of long term complications.

Complication	Number	Percentage
Osteoporosis	63	42
Cardiovascular disease	51	34
Post menopausal bleeding	42	28
Breast cancer	18	12

Women included in the study were aware of osteoporosis (42%) which was also most common long term complication of menopause. Cardiovascular disease, Post-menopausal bleeding, and Breast cancer were other complications after menopause, with which women were aware of 34%,28%,12% respectively.

Table 7: Positive perception.

Perception	Number	Percentage
Life is easier and calmer	72	48
Freedom from rituals	69	46
Freedom from pregnancy	54	36
Menopause is associated with maturity and dignity	78	52

Table 8: Negative perception.

Perception	Number	Percentage
Period of loneliness	51	34
End of sexual life	42	28
Loss of femininity	60	40
Familial problems	27	18
Depressed and irritable	30	20

There were mixed positive (52%) and negative (48%) perception regarding menopause.

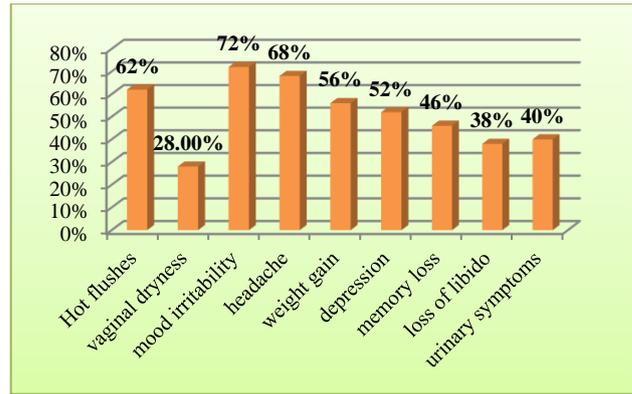


Figure 1: Menopausal symptoms.

86% of subjects were aware about menopausal symptoms and maximum symptoms among subjects were mood irritability (72%), headache (68%) and hot flushes (62%).

Table 9: Assessment of attitude towards HRT.

Attitude	Number	Percentage
HRT has side effects and complications	51	34
HRT to be avoided	42	28
Natural approaches are better	60	40
HRT is a good solution if they had problems	27	18

87.50% of the women were aware of hormonal replacement therapy and among them most of the subjects were concerned about the side effects and complication and complication of HRT. Hence only 4.6% of women were taking HRT.

Table 10: Effects of menopause.

Effect	Yes	No
Working capacity	66% (99)	34% (51)
Sexual life	56% (84)	44% (66)
Knowledge about HRT	88% (132)	12% (18)

Working capacity was affected in 66% of women, and sexual life was affected in 56% of women.

88% of women had knowledge about HRT (hormone replacement therapy).

Table 11: Attitude towards HRT.

Attitude	Number	Percentage
HRT has side effects and complications	117	78
HRT to be avoided	18	12
Natural approaches are better	27	18
HRT is good solution if they had problems	21	14

Table 12: Life style modification.

Attitude	Yes	No
Physical exercise	32%	68%
Yoga/meditation	11%	89%
Healthy eating plan	41%	59%
Calcium supplementation	18%	82%

Nearly half (48%) women preferred gynaecologist as treatment provider rest relied on physician (34%) and general practitioner (22%).

Eighty eight percent of the women were aware of hormonal replacement therapy and among them most of the subjects were concerned about the side effects and complication and complication of HRT. Hence only 4.6% of women were taking HRT. Maximum women have not adopted healthy practices.

About 40% of women never consult doctor and not using any method to relieve menopausal symptoms.

DISCUSSION

In this study 58% women were menopausal and 48% were peri-menopausal. Maximum subjects belonged to age group 46-50 years.

In present study we found mean age of menopause to be 48.4 years while in another study conducted in Gujrat in 2011 by Kishore et al it was 48.2 years and in study conducted in South Korea in 2006 by Eun Kyung Kwak et al it was 52.06 years.⁹

Ninety two percent women in this study had knowledge about HRT while in another study conducted in United Arab Emirates by Hamid S et al only 67% women had knowledge about menopause.¹²

84% of the women considered it to be natural process while in another study conducted in Italy in 2008 by Serena Donati et al 95% of the women considered it to be a natural process.¹³

For maximum women (62%) in this study received information regarding menopause from friends or relatives while in study conducted by Donati S only 59% women had it from friends/relatives and 72% from media and 69% from health professionals.

In this study 52% of the subjects were aware of long term consequences of menopause and amongst them 42% were aware that they will develop osteoporosis then cardiovascular diseases.

In present study women having mixed perception towards menopause. In present study working capacity of 65% of the women was affected and in 55% of the women sexual life was also affected. Maximum women have not adopted healthy practices.

CONCLUSION

Menopause and its symptoms, they are well educated but they are not following the healthy life style modification like healthy food habits, maintain healthy weight, being physically active, do weight bearing exercises, practice yoga/ meditation, calcium rich foods, sun exposure etc.

Knowledge of the concept of menopause will help women to understand that menopause is a normal developmental process. Increased awareness of hormonal variations and subsequent physical, physiological, psychological and sexual changes in the body will prepare women for menopause.

Reassurance and reliable information are prime requirements of women in pre-menopausal, peri-menopausal and post menopausal period.

Husbands or men generally should be well informed about menopause, highlighting the stressful circumstances women go through, and the need for their husbands understanding and support. There should be mass media information dissemination to enlighten women on menopausal symptoms and effects.

Students in both secondary and tertiary institutions should be given lectures on menopause so as to prepare their minds from their youthful days.

Counselors in the medical setting are expected to teach their clients self-coping strategies, especially on the problems of menopause.

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