



STUDY ON AWARENESS OF MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS AND HRT AMONG WOMEN ATTENDING GYNAECOLOGY OPD OF ASRAM HOSPITAL, ELURU

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Menopause is defined as the time of cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhea. It normally occurs between ages 45 and 50 years, average age being 47 years. Menopause is becoming important public health issue. As life expectancy is gradually increasing proportion of women who are menopausal is also increasing. In developing countries women on average are expected to spend approximately 1/4th of her life as postmenopausal women. HRT is confirmed to be most effective in relieving postmenopausal symptoms and preventing long term complications like osteoporosis. Lack of knowledge about HRT is more among less educated women. Effect of culture on menopause has also been discussed in number of other studies involving Asian women. **AIMS/OBJECTIVE:** To investigate awareness and experience of menopausal symptom and hormone therapy in women attending OPD. **MATERIALS/METHODS:** This study is conducted among women attending gynaecological OPD of Alluri Sitarama Raju Academy of Medical Sciences, Eluru. **STUDY TYPE:** Prospective cross sectional study. **PERIOD OF STUDY:** From June 2019 to December 2019 **SAMPLE SIZE:** 200 patients. Structured questionnaire is used in this study **RESULTS:** In our study majority of women were illiterate (75%). Lack of knowledge was associated with women's low educational level and their no or scarce attitude to attend health services. The mean knowledge percentage of menopause and HRT was 44, which is an indication of a low level of knowledge about menopause and MHT. Knowledge of long term risks associated with HRT like cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis was poor. **CONCLUSION:** The above questionnaire based study reveals that knowledge about menopausal symptoms and HRT is relatively low. Most of them consider menopause as a natural process and part of aging, though most of them were bothered by menopausal symptoms, but due to lack of awareness of long term consequence of menopause and poverty very few women sought help for treatment.

KEYWORDS

Menopause, HRT.

INTRODUCTION:

Menopause is defined as the time of cessation of ovarian function resulting in permanent amenorrhea. It normally occurs between ages 45 and 50 years, average age being 47 years. The average age of menopause is 51 years among the women internationally¹. Menopause is becoming important public health issue. As life expectancy is gradually increasing proportion of women who are menopausal is also increasing. In developing countries women on average are expected to spend approximately 1/4th of her life as postmenopausal women.

Menopause has been considered a major transition point in women's reproductive and emotional life. Menopause is not a disease but a natural transition in a woman's life that results from a decrease in the ovarian production of sex hormones such as estrogen, progesterone and testosterone.

These women may experience both physical and psychological problems. Physical complaints in order of frequency are as follows: hot flashes, night sweats or chills, disrupted sleep, vaginal dryness, loss of libido, loss of energy, mood swings, increased irritability, loss of skin tone, and urinary leakage. Psychological complaints include, loss of confidence, depressed mood, irritability, forgetfulness, difficulty in concentrating, panic attacks and anxiety.

The majority of women assume this period distressful due to the associated symptoms resulting from the absence or fluctuations of the ovarian hormones.

60% will have mild symptoms, 20% will have severe and 20% will have no symptoms. There is under reporting of symptoms among Indian women due to sociocultural factors. Severe symptoms compromise overall quality of life for those experiencing them. Unfortunately majority of these women are not aware of the changes brought about by menopause.²

Menopausal hormone therapy (HT) has undergone major changes during the past 20 years. Prior to 2000, HT was widely used to treat menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and vulvovaginal atrophy.³

Symptom relief provides additional benefits such as improved sexual function and overall quality of life (QoL). HRT is well established in prevention of osteoporosis and treatment of urogenital symptoms.. Lack of knowledge about HRT is more among less educated women. HRT usage is low in low resource countries due to its ignorance and reservation on the patients' side to take the hormonal pills 'to keep them young' as they think that menopause is a natural process and they should not alter it by any means including hormones. Majority of the women do not understand the complication and issues associated with menopause. So, the aim of the study was to know the awareness of menopause and HRT among women attending gynaecology OPD in Alluri Sitarama Raju Academy of Medical Sciences, Eluru.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This is a cross-sectional study conducted from the month of June 2019 to December 2019 at Alluri Sitarama Raju Academy of Medical Sciences, Eluru. 200 women between the age group 40 to 60 years who attended the gynaecological OPD were interviewed. Structured questionnaire was used in this study.

INCLUSION CRITERIA:

Women between 40 to 60 years who had given consent to participate in this study.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA:

Women with hypertension,
Diabetes mellitus
Heart disease,
Who were undergoing treatment for cancer.

The socio-demographic variables included the parity, marital status, socioeconomic status, education level. Educational level was sub sectioned into illiterate, primary, secondary. Marital status was divided into single, married and widowed. The income group was divided into low, lower middle and upper middle.

The participating women were given questionnaire which was in Telugu and if they needed any further help with the language it was

provided by one of the doctors to avoid any language barrier. Questions were also asked to know if they knew anything about menopausal symptoms or its long term problems or any treatment modality available. It was also asked that whether menopause was taken as natural event or a change in life which can be moderated by Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). Lastly they were asked whether they know about HRT, its side effect, availability and benefits.

RESULTS:

Age range of participants was 40-60. Range of menarche in the same group of patients was 12-14 years.

Table: 1

VARIABLE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
PARITY		
MULTIPARA	190	95%
NULLIPAROUS	10	5%
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL		
ILLITERATE	150	75%
PRIMARY	40	20%
SECONDARY	10	5%
MARITAL STATUS		
MARRIED	185	92.5%
SINGLE	3	1.5%
WIDOWED	12	6%
SOCIOECONOMIC LEVEL		
LOW	166	83%
LOWER MIDDLE	25	12.5%
UPPER MIDDLE	9	4.5%
AGE OF MENOPAUSE		
40-45YRS	12	6%
46-50YRS	175	87.5%
51-55YRS	13	6.5%

In this study majority were multiparous (95%). 75% were illiterate. 92.5% were married. Many of them belong to low socioeconomic status (83%). Average age of menopause was between 46-50 yrs (87.5%).

Table 2: illustrates the knowledge of the participants regarding menopause symptoms

SYMPTOMS	AWARE(%)	NOTAWARE(%)
HOT FLUSHES	52	48
NIGHT SWEATS	46	54
DEPRESSION	50	50
MOOD SWINGS	40	60
INSOMNIA	44	56
ANXIETY	38	62
IRRITABILITY	40	60
SLEEP DISTURBANCES	46	54
NERVOUSNESS	37	63
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL EXHAUSTION	39	61
BREAST PAIN	45	55
VAGINAL DRYNESS	50	50
URINARY INCONTINENCE	48	52
HAIR THINNING	41	59

In this study 52% were aware that hot flushes is one of the symptoms of menopause. 50% were aware of depression, and vaginal dryness as symptoms. 48% knew about urinary incontinence. 46% know about night sweats and sleep disturbances. 44% are aware of insomnia, and 40% about mood swings and irritability.

Table 3: illustrates the knowledge of women regarding menopause and HRT

VARIABLE	YES	NO
Risk of cardiovascular diseases increases with menopause	23%	77%
Risk of osteoporosis increases with menopause	32%	68%
Risk of depression increases during the menopause period	35%	65%

Menopause can have harmful consequences if not treated	40%	60%
Ever heard of HRT	30%	70%
HRT replaces hormones decreasing during menopause	28%	72%
HRT can reduce vasomotor symptoms	23%	77%
HRT can decrease the risk of osteoporosis	29%	71%
HRT is a good solution, if you have symptoms	24%	76%
HRT has many complications and side effects	33%	67%
Natural approaches are better than HRT	53%	47%
HRT is to be avoided	50%	50%
HRT increases risk of breast cancer	25%	75%

Women were asked about complications of menopause and treatment option available like HRT. 23% believed that risk of cardiovascular diseases increases with menopause. 32% know that the risk of osteoporosis increases with menopause. 35% agreed that risk of depression increases during menopause period.

Only 30% heard about HRT. Among them 28% agreed that HRT replaces hormones decreasing during menopause. 23% believed that HRT can reduce vasomotor symptoms. 29% know that the risk of osteoporosis decreases with HRT. About 33% of them believed that HRT has many complications and side effects. Half of them said that it should be avoided.

DISCUSSION:

In our study majority of women were illiterate (75%). Lack of knowledge was associated with women's low educational level and their no or scarce attitude to attend health services. These results are similar to the study done by Donati S et al⁴.

Many of the women belong to low socioeconomic status which is similar to the study done by Malik HS et al⁵ on knowledge and attitude towards menopause and HRT. Marital status did not significantly effect the knowledge of women regarding menopause which is similar to the study conducted by Smail L et al⁶.

In our study, the mean knowledge percentage of menopause and HRT was 44, which is an indication of a low level of knowledge about menopause and HRT. These results are similar to what was found in the study of Jassim et al⁷. Additionally the knowledge of menopausal symptoms was low, with only 38% having heard about HRT in study by Eman S et al⁸ and 21% in study by Hamid S et al⁹. Knowledge about HRT reducing the vasomotor symptoms was 23% in our study which is similar to study of Iam et al¹⁰.

In our study knowledge of long term risks associated with HRT like cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis was poor which is similar to the study conducted by Clinkingbeard C et al¹¹.

33% of women believed that HRT has many complications and side effects, 53% said that natural approaches are better than HRT. These results are similar to the study of Smail L et al⁶.

CONCLUSION:

The above questionnaire based study reveals that knowledge about menopausal symptoms and HRT is relatively low. Most of them consider menopause as a natural process and part of aging, though most of them were bothered by menopausal symptoms, but due to lack of awareness of long term consequence of menopause and poverty very few women sought help for treatment.

It is important to encourage schools and other educational institutions, medical care providers and the health department to cooperate in educating women about menopause, its symptoms, long term consequences and treatment options. This combined effort by educational programs and health care providers will help in increasing public awareness. This may result in significant improvement in both life expectancy and quality of life of women in future.

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