



## A STUDY ON THE ASSESSMENT OF AWARENESS ABOUT PHYSICAL EXERCISE AMONGST INDIAN POSTMENOPAUSAL WOMEN

### Obstetrics & Gynecology

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### ABSTRACT

Menopause is the stage experienced by every woman around her middle age. Fraught with many uncertainties regarding physical and psychological changes, diet, nutritional supplements and exercise or physical activity, a woman is confused and is at loss of taking correct decisions regarding things which are beneficial for her.

**Aim:** To determine if Indian post-menopausal women are aware about benefits of physical activity or complications due to lack of physical activity.

**Methodology:** A total of 160 Post-menopausal Indian women aged between 45-65 yrs were given a questionnaire in order to assess their level of awareness regarding physical exercise and calculating the level of physical activity performed.

**Result:** Data was analyzed and interpreted with the help of Google spreadsheet. Women were not much interested about performing physical exercise. Most of them belonged to the pre-obese category.

**Conclusion:** Lack of awareness regarding physical exercise was seen among many women who performed low level of physical activity.

### KEYWORDS

Post-menopausal Indian women, awareness, physical activity

### INTRODUCTION

Menopause is one of the most critical stages of woman's life. A woman is said to be menopausal if she has absence of menses for 12 months. The period around the menopause is known as menopausal transition or perimenopause. This transition may occur between ages 45 & 55.<sup>[4]</sup>

Women may have symptoms like hot flashes, mood swings, depression, headache etc. Many problems are associated with the initiation of menopause that are physical, mental, metabolic in nature. These tend to vary with lifestyle. Physical exercise significantly improves the quality of life with mental health and decreases medication requirement. It is well known that physical activities of high (vigorous), moderate & low grade<sup>[6]</sup> definitely reduces the severity of post-menopausal symptoms and complications.

### METHODOLOGY

**Study design:** It is a cross sectional and descriptive study.

**Study duration:** Six months.

**Study population:** Post-menopausal women aged between 45-65 years.

**Sample size:** All the post-menopausal women coming to Gynecology OPD at Dr. PDMMC, Amravati in the 6 months of study duration were included in the study as per the inclusion criteria.

**Study setting:** Study was carried out among the post-menopausal women coming to Gynecology OPD at Dr. PDMMC, Amravati, Maharashtra.

**Sampling method:** Purposive sampling method was being used.

### Inclusion Criteria:

Post-menopausal women between 45 and 65 years of age.

### Exclusion Criteria:

Women affected with any chronic diseases, patient who had pathological menopause either due to surgical procedures (hysterectomy with bilateral oophorectomy) or due to chemotherapeutic medications (cancer patients) and participants who were not willing to give informed consent.

**Study protocol:** Informed consent of all study participants were taken before the start of study. Pretested, validated, self-made questionnaire was filled by the investigator based on the responses given by the study participants maintaining confidentiality and privacy. Questionnaire included demographic data, the age at which they experienced menopause and their annual family income for categorization of economical status. It also included the awareness of benefits of physical exercises or activity among participants and their intention for performing physical activity. The questionnaire was explained in local language to participants.

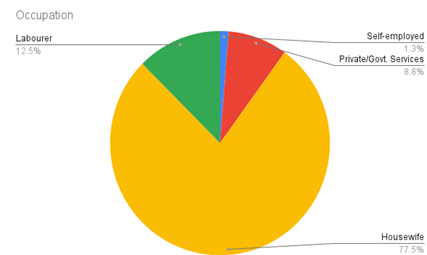
International Physical Activity Questionnaires (IPAQ) was made use of in the collection of data.

**Plan of analysis:** Data was entered in Google spreadsheet and analyzed. Appropriate test of significance was applied to the data.

### RESULT

Data was analyzed and interpreted with the help of Google spreadsheet.

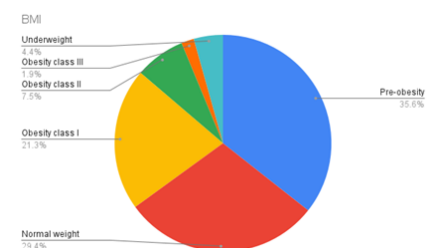
In the present study, most of the women were housewives (77.5%) some were labourers (12.5%), few were private/government service employees (8.8%) and very few were self-employed (1.3%) as shown in Fig.1. Their age ranged between 45-65 years.



**Fig.1 : Occupation**

Most of them belonged to the lower income group with annual family income less than 60000 per annum.

Their weight and height were calculated to obtain BMI. By using classification of BMI, results were obtained and women were categorized as those having Normal weight 29.4%, Pre-obese 35.6%, Obese class I 21.3%, Obese class II 7.5%, Obese class III 1.9% and Underweight 4.4% as shown in Fig.2.



**Fig.2 : BMI**

Women were not much free to talk about the symptoms and many were not able to describe the symptoms that they experienced during menopause. So, many selected the option “any other”. The most common symptom was headache, followed by hot flashes and anxiety. Some did not experience any symptoms.

Different types of activities that were taken into consideration during their last 7 days - Vigorous physical activities included running or jogging (~ 8 km/hr.), walking very fast (~ 7 km/hr.), bicycling (> 6 km/hr.), heavy yard work like heavy lifting, aerobics. [6] It also included heavy gardening (such as continuous hoeing), playing with children at a fast pace, fast swimming etc. Moderate activities included bicycling (< 16 km/hr.), dancing, general gardening (raking, trimming shrubs), carrying light loads. [6] It also included stair climbing, carrying small children, mopping floor etc. Light activities included walking at casual pace, such as while grocery shopping and doing light household chores, walking around the office; sitting at your computer, making the bed, eating, preparing food & washing dishes. [6][1] It also included stretching, standing, doing laundry etc.

Using IPAQ Scores, only 23.1% of the total 160 post-menopausal women performed vigorous level of physical activity whereas 36.3% performed moderate level of physical activity. Low level of physical activity was relatively more i.e. in 40.6% of women as shown in Fig.3.

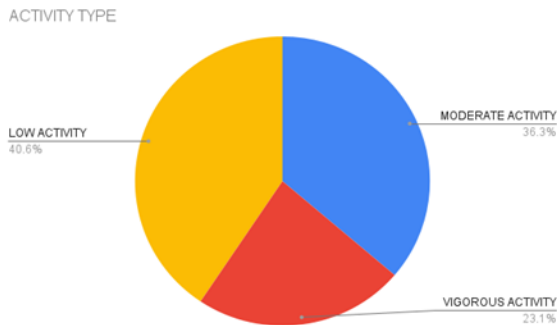


Fig.3 : Activity Type

All these suggest that women were not much interested or were not much aware about the physical exercise.

When asked about their knowledge regarding the reduction of complications occurring post menopause due to daily physical exercise, 36.9% women answered “Don’t know”, 34.4% said “Yes”, 23.8% “No” and 5% were confused, so they answered “Maybe” as shown in Fig.4.

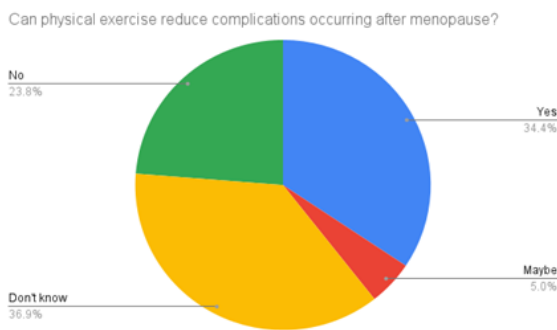


Fig.4 : Can physical exercise reduce complications occurring after menopause ?

Women who lacked the awareness were encouraged to be active in their daily life by commencing simple tasks like taking a walk outside for at least half & hour with friends which will not only maintain their fitness level but also make them a socially active & an extrovert kind of person.

**DISCUSSION**

In this study, post-menopausal Indian women were asked about the activities they performed during last 7 days and it was found out that they performed low level of physical activity as many spent their time

doing household chores and hardly performed any vigorous type of physical activity like heavy gardening, walking very fast or lifting any heavy materials.

Only some of the women who were labourers were found to be active in the past 7 days who regularly performed vigorous level of physical activity. It was not their awareness about physical health that drove them towards being active but it was due to their daily work to earn their daily wages. This helped them to put themselves through the condition that demands hard work that ultimately resulted in performing vigorous level of physical activity.

Majority of the women were not aware that going out for a walk may actually improve their post menopausal health and may help prevent post-menopausal complications.

In one of the study carried out among 125 women from Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Raigad and Palghar district of Maharashtra, the findings were that majority of women performed moderate level of physical activity. These women had a positive attitude towards physical activity which is important to lead a healthy life. [5]

Another study of Awareness of osteoporosis in postmenopausal Indian women which was performed among 100 postmenopausal women in Chandigarh showed that there was significant deficit in the awareness level of postmenopausal Indian women regarding osteoporosis. [3]

In a cross-sectional community based study about the Quality of Life in Postmenopausal Women, which was carried out in rural areas, Puducherry among 172 women, findings were that 42.4% belong to socioeconomic status (SES) Class IV. The prevalence of one or more symptoms of vasomotor, psychological, and sexual domains were 23.8%, 87%, 68%, respectively. They also found an association between SES and both vasomotor and psychological symptoms which showed that menopause-related symptoms had a negative effect on the Quality OfLife (QOL) of postmenopausal women. [7]

An article in DNA India gives detailed information about - a study that was published in the journal of The North American Menopause Society called Menopause, involving nearly 300 women, said that performing physical activity with sufficient volume and intensity decreases the development of menopause symptoms. [2]

While in an article published in Times of India (TOI) revealed that a study was performed in U.S. among 1000 people said that 65% of women avoid the gym for the fear of being judged while only 36% of men felt the same. 55% women felt that they are being judged for not looking fit, about 49% felt that their workout clothes are not looking well enough and 25% felt that they are being stereotyped. This study also tells us about the mental status of most of the women, which further affects the hope of performing or restricting the act of physical exercise. [8]

**CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that 40.6% women out of total 160 Indian post-menopausal women performed low level of physical activity. The percentage of those who performed moderate and high level of physical activity were only 36.3% and 23.1% respectively. It was also found that women who were labourers performed high level of physical activity not because they intended to, but due to their daily routine work that demanded high physical activity. It was observed that many of them were not aware that daily physical exercise could result in reduction of complications occurring post menopause. This shows that there is lack of awareness about physical exercise among majority of the Indian postmenopausal women.

As they performed low activity, most of them came under the Pre-obese category.

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