

## Original Research Article

# Knowledge and perception of postmenopausal women towards menopause

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Aim of the research was to study the knowledge and perception of postmenopausal women towards menopause.

**Methods:** It was a cross sectional study which was carried at outpatient department of psychiatry, Government medical college, Srinagar over a period of 3 months. Participants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the study were evaluated on a semi-structured proforma for demographic variables, knowledge and attitude towards menopause.

**Results:** A total of 120 postmenopausal women were included in our study. Mean age of study population was 54.5±8.6 years. Majority of women belonged to rural background (80.0%) in the age group of 51-60 years (58.3%), married (78.3%), having 1-3 issues (53.3%) and had received no formal education (67.5%). Menopause was natural in (80.8%) of women and (19.2%) had surgical menopause. 85% of study population had heard about menopause at the time their periods stopped mostly from family elders and friends. 45% had knowledge about the age of the menopause, while as only (20.8%) were aware about the symptoms of menopause. 56.6% of study population were having positive perception about the menopause.

**Conclusions:** Majority of our women were unaware of menopausal symptoms. Most of them considered it as a natural process of aging and thus were having a positive perception about the menopause.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Menopause, Perception

### INTRODUCTION

Menopause is a combination of two Greek words, meno (monthly), and pause (stop), it means the stopping of the menstruation and the ending of fertility. Menopause is a physiological event marking the end of women's reproductive life due to ovarian failure. The natural onset of menopause occurs between the ages of 45-55 years.<sup>1</sup> Hormonal changes at menopause are associated with numerous physical and psychological symptoms like vasomotor symptoms, sleep disturbances, mood disorders, cognitive impairment, vaginal atrophy and increased health risks for several chronic disorders including osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease.<sup>2</sup>

Menopause, the cessation of menstruation, is a psychosocial and clinical event. The psychosocial phenomena surrounding menopause are attitudes, perceptions and expectations. Clinically, menopause represents the cessation of the monthly cycles. It is a transitional period in women's life.<sup>3</sup> Perception, attitudes and knowledge regarding the menopause may differ from one female population to another. These differences have been related to female age, parity, socio economic, cultural, educational, and geographical factors.<sup>4,5</sup> This study is an effort to understand the knowledge and perception of postmenopausal women towards menopause.

**METHODS**

The present study was a descriptive cross-sectional study which was conducted in department of psychiatry, Government medical college, Srinagar. The study population consisted of all the outpatient postmenopausal women who attended the departments over a period of 3 months, from October 2019 to December 2019 who fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the study.

**Inclusion criteria**

Patients who gave consent for the study. Patients above 40 years of age.

**Exclusion criteria**

Patients who did not give consent. Patients with major cognitive impairment. Patients suffering from psychotic disorders.

A semi-structured proforma was created to record demographic details, including age, marital status, parity of the women, education and residence. Regarding knowledge and perception the questionnaire was formulated and the participants were asked if they had the knowledge of menopause at the time when their periods stopped, age of menopause, knowledge of menopausal symptoms, if they considered menopause as a medical condition or a natural process and treatment of menopausal symptoms. Enquiry about the perception was made by their opinion about this life event whether it was positive, negative or neutral. The data was entered into excel sheet and tabulated. The data was analyzed using EpiInfo 7.0. The study was approved by the Institutional ethical committee.

**RESULTS**

The mean age of study population was  $s\ 54.5\pm 8.6$  years. As shown in Table 1 majority of the study population were in the age group 51-60 years (58.3%) followed by 41-50 years (30%), married 78.3% with 53.3% having 1-3 children, 2.5% being nulliparous and 10% having greater than 5 children. Regarding the education, 67.5% were having no formal education and 80% were from rural background. Menopause was natural in 80.8% of women and 19.2% had surgical menopause.

85% of study population had heard about menopause at the time their periods stopped mostly from family elders and friends. 45% had knowledge about the age of the menopause, while as only 20.8% were aware about the symptoms of menopause. 56.6% of study population were having positive perception while as 30% had negative perception about menopause. Most of the study population (81.7%) considered it as a natural process, 62.5% were happy with cessation of mensuration while as 20.8% were worried about its cessation. Only 11.7% were worried about the loss of fertility as depicted in Table 2.

Most common menopausal symptom reported were hot flushes (55%), mood swings (55%), body aches (51.7%), irritability (50%), depression (50%), night sweats (50%) and insomnia (48.3%) as shown in Table 3.

**Table 1: Demographic profile.**

Variables	Variants	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Age (years)	41-50	36	30.0
	51-60	70	58.3
	61-70	12	10.0
	≥71	2	1.6
Marital status	Married	94	78.3
	Widow	21	17.5
	Divorced	5	4.2
Parity	Nulliparous	3	2.5
	1-3	64	53.3
	3-5	41	34.2
	>5	12	10.0
Education	Primary school	10	8.3
	High school	14	11.7
	Higher secondary	7	5.8
	Graduate and above	8	6.7
	Illiterate	81	67.5
Residence	Rural	96	80.0
	Urban	24	20.0

**Table 2: Knowledge and perception about menopause.**

Variables	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
<b>Knowledge about menopause</b>		
Heard about menopause at the time their periods stopped	102	85.0
Age of menopause	54	45.0
Symptoms of menopause	25	20.8
Treatment of symptoms	8	6.6
<b>Perception about menopause</b>		
Positive event	68	56.6
Negative event	36	30.0
Natural process	98	81.7
Medical condition	22	18.3
Happy about menstrual cessation	75	62.5
Worried about menstrual cessation	25	20.8
Worried about loss of fertility	14	11.7

**Table 3: Symptoms of menopause.**

Symptoms	Number (N=120)	Percentage (%)
Hot flushes	66	55.0
Mood swings	66	55.0
Body aches	62	51.7
Irritability	60	50.0
Depression	60	50.0
Insomnia	58	48.3
Night sweats	60	50.0
Weight gain	50	41.7
Frequency of micturition	43	35.8
Vaginal dryness	23	20.8
Difficulty in concentration	25	19.2

## DISCUSSION

Women in western countries tend to be better informed about the menopause and its symptoms.<sup>6</sup> A survey conducted at Mexico city by Velasco-Murrillo et al reported that 83.8% of women have knowledge about climacteric symptoms of the menopause.<sup>7</sup> In the present study we have found that 85% of women had heard about menopause at the time their periods stopped, 45% had knowledge about the age of the menopause, while as only 20.8% were aware about the symptoms of menopause. Most of these women were uneducated (67.5%) and belonged to rural background (80%). These results are consistent with earlier studies which have shown that women of developing countries are still lagging behind in health matters like menopause.<sup>7-9</sup>

Women in eastern societies view menopause as a natural process and hold a positive attitude.<sup>10,11</sup> Chen et al reported that 91.7% midlife Chinese women in Taiwan perceive menopause a natural phenomenon and most of these women could deal with menopause in a positive way.<sup>12</sup> Another population based cross sectional study from south India showed similar results that 57% of women perceive menopause as convenient.<sup>13</sup> Results of our study can be compared with other Asian studies, 56.6% of our study women have positive perception about menopause, 80.8% perceive menopause as a natural process and 62.5% were happy due to cessation of menstruation and these women did not want to have menses again.

In our study frequency of menopausal symptoms varied from 19.2% to 55%, commonest symptoms reported were hot flushes (55%), mood swings (55%), body aches (51.7%), irritability (55%) and depression (55%). There is a marked difference in the symptom presentation across the various societies which indicate the differences in the dietary habits and life style across various groups. In Japanese population commonest symptoms were shoulder stiffness (50%), fatigue (2%), headache (30%), and hot flushes (28%), while symptoms experienced by mid-aged

Thai women were dizziness, tiredness, headache, joint aches/pain and backache.<sup>14,15</sup>

## Limitations

Being a hospital based study, it has its limitations of not being representative of the community.

## CONCLUSION

Majority of our women were unaware of menopausal symptoms. Most of them considered it as a natural process of aging and thus were having a positive perception about the menopause. It is important to educate the women through various platforms especially the mass media so they have right and proper information about this neglected health issue.

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