A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF MENOPAUSE AND MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS IN A TERTIARY CARE CENTRE

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

The word menopause is derived from the Greek word 'meno' meaning monthly and 'pause' meaning cessation. Menopause is defined as complete cessation of menses for twelve consecutive months or more. The decline in ovarian function due to ageing begins in most women between age 45 and 55 years. Most women (8 out of 10) experience some symptoms, typically lasting about 4 years after the last period, but in about 10% of women it continues for up to 12 years. By 2026 it is estimated that >45 years female population of our country will be more than 202 million necessitating substantial amount of care.⁵ With this background, the study was done to understand the prevalence and severity of menopausal symptoms in women attending the OPD. The aim was to determine the mean age at attaining menopause and to understand the prevalence of the various menopausal symptoms associated with menopausal status.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It is a Descriptive Study, which made use of the modified Kupperman questionnaire as a basis for assessing menopausal symptoms.

RESULTS

In this study, the mean age of attaining menopause was 47.8 years. Hot flushes were found in 51.2% of menopausal women, night sweats were found in 38.6% of women, while excessive sweating was found in 25.2% of women. The menopausal triad of hot flushes, sweating and night sweats was found in 24% of cases. Depressed mood was found in 21.9% while 17% women had anxiety or mood irritability. In this study, lower backache was most frequent complaint which was 65.4%.

CONCLUSION

With increasing life span, the number of menopausal women will increase in the coming decades. Identifying the symptoms and counseling the patients for lifestyle modifications will help them in improving their quality of life. This study on menopausal women was done on women attending OPD by using modified Kupperman scale. The study was on limited number of patients and was for short duration.

KEY WORDS

Menopause; Menopausal Symptoms; Postmenopausal Women, Lifestyle Modification.

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BACKGROUND

The word menopause is derived from the Greek word 'meno' meaning monthly and 'pause' meaning cessation. Menopause is defined as complete cessation of menses for twelve consecutive months or more. Menopause is the end of menstruation and reproductive life due to loss of ovarian follicular activity. The decline in ovarian function due to ageing begins in most women between age 45 and 55 years. The lack of oestrogen and progesterone causes many changes in women's physiology that affect their health and well-being.

Most women (8 out of 10) experience some symptoms, typically lasting about 4 years after the last period, but in about 10% of women it continues for up to 12 years.

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The most common symptoms are hot flushes and night sweats. Other symptoms include mood changes, memory and concentration loss, vaginal dryness, lack of interest in sex, headaches, joint and muscle stiffness. Menopause¹ Symptoms and severity may vary not only among the different individuals due to ethnic, racial and cultural variations but also with duration of menopause.

The average age of menopause and the menopausal symptoms vary for different women from different race, countries etc. Average age of menopause of an Indian woman is 46.2 years which is much lesser than their Western counterparts (51 years).² With increasing life expectancy, women spend one third of life in this phase. By 2026 it is estimated that >45 years female population of our country will be more than 202 million necessitating substantial amount of postmenopausal care.³ With this background the study was done to understand the prevalence and severity of menopausal symptoms in women attending the OPD. The aim was to determine the mean age at attaining menopause and to understand the prevalence of the various menopausal symptoms associated with menopausal status.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive Study was done from February 2018 to June 2018 in the department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Osmania Medical College. A total of 246 women between the age of 40-65 years were enrolled for the study who attended the Gynaecology OPD and gave consent to participate in the study.

It is a questionnaire-based study which made use of the modified Kupperman questionnaire as a basis for assessing menopausal symptoms. The original 11 items of Kupperman scale included were sweating/hot flushes, palpitation, vertigo, headache, paraesthesia, formication, arthralgia, and myalgia (Categorized as somatic symptoms), and fatigue, nervousness, and melancholia (Categorized as psychological symptoms). In addition to the same 11 items included in the original KI, the modified version adds urogenital symptoms including urinary infection and sexual complaints. Scores ranging from 0-6, 7-15, 16-30, and >30 were used to rate the degree of severity as none, mild, moderate, and severe, respectively. The total score ranges from 0 to 63, calculated as the sum of all items by the weighting factor. Using semi-structured questionnaires, 246 women in their menopause were interviewed. Information regarding their complaints both physical and psychological was analysed.

Inclusion Criteria

All women with menopause for > 1 year.

Exclusion Criteria

- Women with history of taking estrogen and / or progesterone including oral contraceptives pill/HRT, phytoestrogens in the last three months.
- Women on medications such as anxiolytics, anti-depressants.
- Women suffering from chronic renal disease.
- Known case of thyroid and parathyroid disorder.
- Known case of genital malignancy.
- Women not giving consent for the data collection due to own reasons.

Statistical Analysis

Data was analysed coded, entered, and analysed using computer software Microsoft Excel for qualitative variable. For qualitative variable mean and Standard deviation was calculated.

RESULTS

Age at Menopause	Number	Percentage
40-44 years	64	26.0%
45 -50 years	98	39.8%
50 to 54 years	67	27.2%
55 to 59 years	11	4.5%
60 TO 65 years	6	2.4%
Total	246	

Table 1. Age at Menopause

246 post menopausal women were studied in this study. Age at menopause of participant was grouped into 40-44, 45-50, 50-54, 55-59 and 60 to 65 years respectively. In this study the mean age of attaining menopause was 47.8 with standard deviation of 5.3 years.

Vasomotor Symptoms	Number	Percentage
Hot flushes	126	51.2%
Night sweats	95	38.6%
Excessive sweating	62	25.2%

Table 2. Vasomotor Symptoms Prevalence

Hot flushes were found in 51.2% of menopausal women, night sweats were found in 38.6% of women, while palpitation was found in 25.2% of women. The menopausal triad of hot flushes, sweating and night sweats with palpitation was found in 24% of cases.

Psychosomatic Symptoms	Number	Percentage
Depressed mood/ crying spells	54	22%
Anxiety/ irritability/nervousness	42	17%
Insomnia	79	32%
Formication	7	3%

Table 3. Psychosomatic Symptoms

32% of women had sleep disturbance. Depressed mood or crying spells were found in 22% of cases. 17% of women had anxiety or mood irritability.

Somatic Symptoms	Number	Percentage
Arthralgia/myalgia	118	48%
Low backache	161	65%
Early fatigability	128	52%
Headache/ vertigo	17	7%
Paraesthesia	25	10%

Table 4. Somatic Symptoms

In this study lower backache was most frequent complaint presented by 65.4% of postmenopausal women. This was included as individual symptom as women specifically complained of lower backache. Generalized muscle and joint pain was in 48% of women while early fatigability was present in 52% of women. Only 7% women in the study group complained of headache or vertigo.

Symptoms	Number	Percentage
Dryness of vagina	73	29.6%
Bladder problem	68	27.6%
Sexual problem	49	20%

Table 5. Urogenital Symptoms

Dryness of vagina was present in 29.6% of women. 27.6% women complained of bladder problem which included stress and urge incontinence. Only 20 % women complained of sexual problems

DISCUSSION

246 post-menopausal women were studied in this study. The age group of participants was 40-44, 45-50, 50-54, 55-59 and 60 to 65 years respectively. In this study the mean age of attaining menopause was 47.8 years. The mean age was similar to study done by Nusrat Nisar et al⁴ in which the mean age was 49.38 ± 14.29 years. Average age of menopause is less in women of Indian sub-continent compared to European women.

Hot flushes were found in 51.2% of menopausal women, night sweats were found in 38.6% of women, while palpitation was found in 25.2% of women. The menopausal

triad of hot flushes, sweating and night sweats was found in 24% of cases. In a similar study done by Fareha Khatoon et al,⁵ the triad of hot flushes night sweats and excessive sweating was 53.3%. The variation may be due to the fact that the triad is more common in women within 4 to 5 years of menopause and in this study women of different duration of menopause were included in the study.

32% of women had sleep disturbance. Depressed mood or crying spells were found in 21.9% of cases. 17% women had anxiety or mood irritability. Crying spells, irritability or anxiety was more common in women who had disturbed sleep or were suffering from hot flushes and night sweats. In a similar study done by Akansha Singh and Shishir Kumar Pradhan, 62.7% had sleep disturbances.⁶ The difference can be due to variation in cultural and regional differences.

In this study lower backache was most frequent complaint which was similar to study done by Chow SN¹, Huang CC, Lee YT⁷-et al in which the most frequently occurring menopausal symptoms in Taiwanese women were lumbago or low back pain (68%), fatigue (59%), Dryness of vagina was present in 29.6% of women. 27.6% women complained of bladder problem which included stress and urge incontinence. Only 20 % women complained of sexual problems. These symptoms were more common in older age women.

Limitations

It was a hospital-based study of short duration. The study group was limited in number and it was done only on women who had achieved menopause. A study on perimenopausal women may also create awareness among women to do life style modification before they attain menopause.

CONCLUSION

Permanent cessation of menstruation signifies the end of reproductive phase of a woman. Depletion of ovarian hormones leads to different menopausal symptoms which may affect her quality of life. With increasing life span the

menopausal women will increase in the coming decades. Awareness about the menopausal symptoms and counseling the patients for life style modification will help them in improving quality of life. Balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep, avoiding stress will reduce the symptoms in most of the women and hormone replacement therapy may be required only in few women.

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