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AWARENESS OF MIDDLE AGED WOMEN ABOUT CHANGES AND it's EFFECTS ON HEALTH DURING MENOPAUSE

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Abstract:

Women's health, though often neglected, is very important to a family's as well as a nation's growth and development. In an average Indian family, it is quite normal for women's health issues to be given secondary importance; not only by other family members but also by the concerned women themselves. The average life expectancy in India, which was 31 years according to census conducted four years after independence, increased to 61 years in 1991. So as in 2015; 46% women population will be above 40 years. With the increasing life expectancy a woman spends almost one third of her life in menopause.

KEYWORDS:

Middle Aged Women , Health During Menopause , women's health issues .

INTRODUCTION

Women have a more complex phase of middle age and old age than men because of the dominant effects in them of hormonal changes caused by menopause.

Middle age is the most dreaded period in total life span, because there is traditional belief concerning the mental and physical deterioration that are believed to accompany the cessation of the reproductive life.

Middle age is the time when men undergo a change in virility and women a change in fertility. Most women experience a disruption in homeostasis during their forties, when normally they go through the menopause.

In middle age men and women must make the most difficult physical adjustment is to changes in their sexual capacity. Women go through the menopause, or change of life, at which time the menstrual periods cease, and they lose their child bearing ability. The years during which the women go through the menopause are often referred to as "critical".

Menopause- The term "menopause" comes from the Greek words meno (month) and pause (to end). Thus, it literally means permanent physiological, or natural, cessation of menstrual cycles. The absence of menstrual periods for 12 months is usually used as the definition of "natural" menopause.

The word menopause is commonly used to signal the end of the fertile phase of a women's life happening more or less in middle.

Why does natural menopause happen? : Menopause is triggered by the faltering and shutting down of the ovaries, which are a part of the body's endocrine system of hormone production. During menopause the hormones that make reproduction possible and influence sexual behavior reach extremely

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low levels. There is actually depletion of eggs of follicles in the ovaries and that is the main reason of falling of female hormones estrogens.

The process of the ovaries shutting down is a phenomenon that involves the entire cascade of a women's reproductive functioning from brain to skin. This major physiological event usually has some effect on almost every aspect of a woman's body and life.

The menopausal syndrome:

- 1) Cessation of menstruation
- 2) Generalized atrophy of the reproductive system
- 3) Decline in feminine appearance
- 4) Physical discomforts
- 5) Weight gain
- 6) Knobbiness
- 7) Personality changes

Importance of knowledge about menopause:

Menopausal health demands priority in the Indian scenario due to the increase in life expectancy and growing population of menopausal women. Large efforts are required to educate and make women aware of menopausal symptoms, reduction of discomforts and enable them to seek appropriate medical care to avoid disability in future.

Menopause is the time in a women's life when the function of the ovaries ceases and the ovaries are the main source of female hormones- estrogen, which controls the development of female body characteristics such as the breasts, body shape and body hair. Estrogen protects the bones. A woman can develop osteoporosis (thinning of bones) later in life when her ovaries do not produce adequate estrogen.

The menopausal transition starts with infrequent periods and ends with the final menstrual period. The transition can begin as early as the 30 s and last even into the 60 s. This span of time is also referred to as the change of life or the climacteric.

Experiencing menopause is experiencing transition in life for a woman. No more periods , no more child bearing , no more milk producing capability are some of the changes that immediately hit a woman. There are also changes in physical appearance, psyche, and a dry vagina.

Climacteric can be divided in to 3 phases:

Pre Menopause: during this phase there is little disruption of ovarian function and levels of reproductive hormones are already becoming lower and more erratic and symptoms of hormone withdrawal may begin to occur but the menstrual cycle remains regular.

Peri Menopause: represents declining ovarian function with menstrual irregularities it may be 4-5 years before full menopause sets in. It can begin up to 10 years prior to the last menstrual period .Symptoms commonly start or become troublesome during this time. Peri menopause is different for each woman.

Post Menopause: is the entire period of time that comes after the last menstrual period, when 12 months have passed with no menstrual periods occurring, a woman has reached full menopause.

Transition period before menopause can be the most traumatic and at times psychologically depressing but there are two sides to it, on one side there is sadness and gloom of losing youth but on the other side there is liberation and freedom from the monthly routine and a new found status of wisdom and maturity.

The symptoms of menopause are not an illness; just a natural consequence of ageing. But menopause may cause complications, because declining estrogen levels increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Bone density decreases at a rapid rate after menopause and some women develop osteoporosis and brittle or weak bones break easily; especially those in the hip , wrist, and spine.

The linings of both the vagina and of the urethra (urinary out let) become drier, thinner, and have less elasticity with the onset of menopause ; consequently women tend to experience burning and itching and have an increased chance of urinary or vaginal infections . A frequent urge to urinate is common with minor incontinence or leakage occurring especially when laughing, sneezing, or coughing. In addition, sexual intercourse may become increasingly uncomfortable or even painful.

Most common menopause symptoms, the hot flash, are a consequence of dropping estrogen levels that cause blood vessels to expand rapidly with an attendant increase in skin temperature.

METHODOLOGY:

The present observational study is conducted in Kallam town of Osmanabad district which is rural developing place with about 20,000 populations. Tq Kallam is located in Marathwada region of Maharashtra state.

Celebrating world menopause day 18 October, woman health awareness project is carried out by home science department.

150 middle aged women engaged in social activities like self help group, mahila mandal, bhajani mandal; selected randomly. Interviewed with prior appointment and self semi structured questionnaire.

Within group activity; diagram of woman body showing menopausal symptoms related to body parts were explained, then interviewed personally.

Questionnaire sought information about socio status, physical and psychological menopausal symptoms, attitudes regarding menopause and their awareness about medical investigations needed after 40 s.

Data was compiled, analyzed and presented in percentages.

FINDINGS:

Premenopausal women were slightly younger and educated than other respondents. All respondents were similar with respect to their occupation, type of residence. According to respondents premenopausal symptoms started at age 35. Mean age of menopause observed in our study is 47 years.

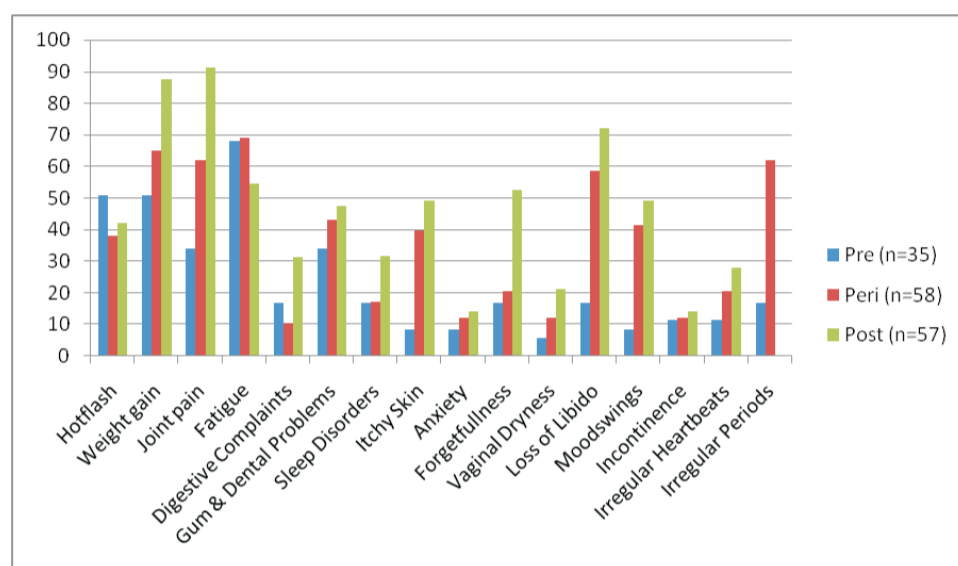
Table 1. Socio status

| 1A) Age Distribution | No | Percent |
|------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 40-44 | 38 | 25.33 |
| 45-49 | 46 | 30.66 |
| 50-54 | 49 | 32.66 |
| 55-59 | 17 | 11.33 |
| 1B) Climacteric Stage | | |
| Pre menopause | 35 | 23.33 |
| Peri menopause | 58 | 38.66 |
| Post menopause | 57 | 38 |
| 2) Marital Status | | |
| Married | 121 | 80.66 |
| Widow/divorced | 29 | 19.33 |
| 3) Educational Status | | |
| Illiterate | 43 | 28.66 |
| Literate below degree | 84 | 56 |
| Degree & PG | 23 | 15.33 |
| 4) Lifestyle | | |
| Sedentary | 82 | 54.66 |
| Moderate | 24 | 16 |
| Heavy work (physical) | 44 | 29.3 |

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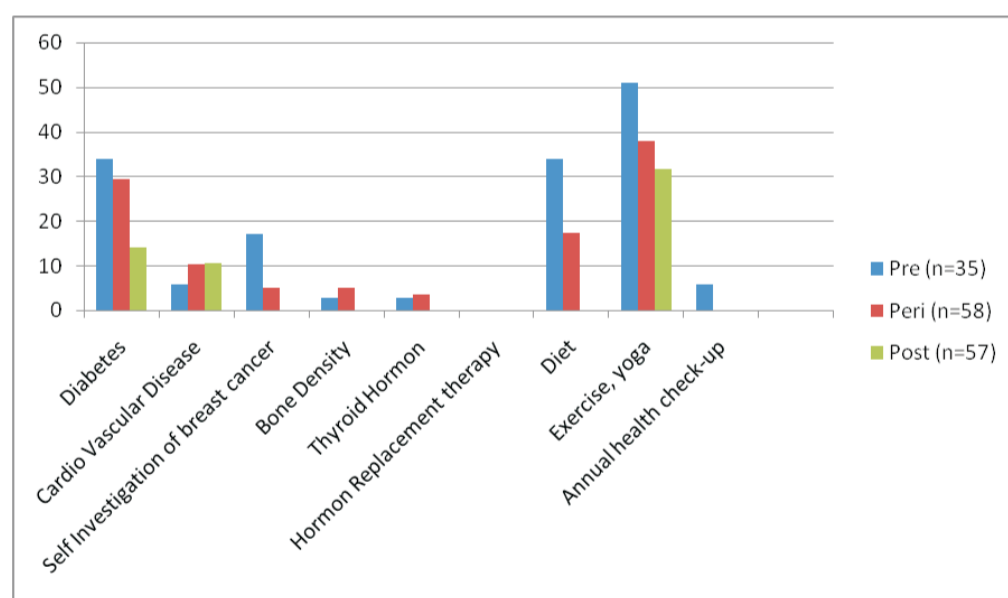
Occurrence of menopausal symptoms observed in all three climacteric stages that is pre menopause, perimenopause, and post menopause .Significantly higher proportion of post menopausal women reported weight gain, joint pain, loss of libido as compared to pre and perimenopausal women. In addition to joint pain and joint swelling pre and perimenopausal women noted about pricking pain in heels also. Almost all respondents hesitated to respond to vaginal dryness, urge incontinence, and sexual desire.

Table 2. Occurrence of menopausal symptoms:



Though the changes in body and mind occurred in menopause ; may become troublesome to some women after 40 s .That is fractures of bones due to osteoporosis , cardiovascular diseases due to weight gain , hypothyroidism ,depression and urinary infections due to vaginal dryness ; so the knowledge ,awareness and precautionary measures were assessed ;and it is observed that rural women definitely affected by menopausal symptoms but they attributed it to ageing and become adapted .

Table 3. Awareness about medical investigations and precautionary measures:



Though 71% of respondents were educated but were unaware about medical investigations needed after 40 s except sugar test in diabetes .Due to impact of Ramdev Baba now respondents were aware about yoga. All respondents were kept minimum 3 fasts in a week for religious reasons; but not aware about

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calcium rich food, plant estrogens-soya bean, flax seeds. Only premenopausal respondents were aware about annual health check up. No one respondent knows about hormone replacement therapy.

Table 4. Attitudes regarding menopause

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| convenient | 116 | 77.3% |
| Diminishing abilities | 81 | 54% |
| Suspicious about loss of femininity | 21 | 14% |

Though 54% respondents complained about diminishing abilities with the onset of menopause; 77.3%respondents showed positive attitude regarding menopause because freedom from menstrual cycle, inhibitions in religious activities.

Table 5. Sharing problematic symptoms

| | | | |
|----------------|-----|-------|-------|
| friends | 17% | 20.68 | 12.28 |
| Family members | - | - | - |
| husband | - | 3.44 | - |
| doctor | - | 1.72 | 1.75 |

Rural women didn't discuss their menopausal problems with any one and even didn't visit to doctor for treatment. As Dr. Rani Bang express in her study, that, "rural women are definitely affected by psychosomatic factors but they have so many other problems to deal , which makes menopause seem less important so they do not notice it".

CONCLUSION:

Such regional study creates awareness of own body, its functioning in respondents and also helps in educating women to read signals of body, early identification of trouble some symptom.

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