

Study of Symptoms in Postmenopausal Women: A Hospital Based Study

Dr. Ramalingam Kolisetty^{1*}, Dr. Neeli Uma Jyothi²

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Menopausal symptoms, though well tolerated by some women, may be particularly troublesome in others. Severe symptoms can compromise the overall quality of life for those experiencing them. **Material & Methods:** A hospital based cross sectional study was done from a tertiary care hospital. The study was carried out from November 2014 to February 2015. A total of 152 women presenting to the outpatient department of the hospital were selected for the study using systematic random sampling technique. A pre-designed pre tested semi structured questionnaire was used for data collection. **Results:** Among the total 152 post menopausal women, prevalence of vasomotor symptoms including hot flushes & night sweats were observed in 38.6% & 43.7% of the study population respectively. Psychosomatic symptoms like sleep disturbances, muscle & joint pains were seen in almost half of the proportion. The overall prevalence of anxiety and depression was found to be 18.8% and 26.5% respectively. **Conclusions:** The present hospital based study among post menopausal women found a high prevalence of menopausal symptoms. Health education among women in the peri menopausal age group and specialist clinics at the primary & secondary health care level can probably cater the health care needs of the post menopausal women.

Keywords: *Post Menopausal Women, Menopausal Symptoms, Hospital, Prevalence*

Menopause is the permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from the loss of follicular activity of the ovaries. It is a stage when the menstrual cycle stops for longer than 12 months and there is a drop in the levels of estrogen and progesterone, the two most important hormones in the female body.¹

According to the World Health Organization, post menopausal women are those who have stopped menstrual bleeding for about one year or stopped having periods as a result of medical or surgical intervention. In 1990, about 25 million women worldwide reached menopause; this number is expected to double by the late 2020s.² About 130 million Indian women are expected to live beyond menopause by 2015.³

¹ Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, NRI Medical College

² Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, Guntur Medical College, Government General Hospital, Guntur

*Corresponding Author

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With the advent of modern medicine and increased life expectancy, many women are likely to live for more than two decades beyond menopause, in an estrogen deficient state.⁴ Although menopause is a universal phenomenon, there is a considerable variation among women regarding the age of attaining menopause and the manifestation of menopausal signs and symptoms.⁵

Menopausal symptoms, though well tolerated by some women, may be particularly troublesome in others. Severe symptoms can compromise the overall quality of life for those experiencing them. There is under-reporting of symptoms especially among Indian women due to various socio cultural factors.⁶

Hence the present study was designed with an objective to assess various menopausal symptoms related with post menopausal women with special emphasis on vasomotor, psychosomatic and psychological symptoms.

MATERIAL & METHODS

A hospital based cross sectional study was done from a tertiary care hospital. The study was carried out for a period of 10 months from October 2014 to July 2015. A total of 152 women presenting to the outpatient department of the hospital were selected for the study using systematic random sampling technique.

Study population:

Inclusion criteria- All post menopausal women aged 40-54 years who have attained menopause within the last 5 years. Exclusion criteria- Postmenopausal women with hysterectomy, history of diabetes, hypertension, thyroid disease, cardiovascular diseases, tuberculosis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis were excluded from the study.

A pre-designed pre tested semi structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Questionnaire contained the following variables:

- (1) Socio demographic variables like age, education, occupation, socio economic status
- (2) Variables to know about menopausal symptoms. The menopausal symptoms reported by the study subjects were taken for a recall period of last 3 months from the date of interview. The menopausal symptoms assessed in the study were self-reported symptoms by the study subjects.
- (3) Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) and the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D) were used to assess the psychological menopausal problems that is anxiety and depression respectively.^{7,8}

Informed consent was taken from the study participants prior to the start of the study.

Data analysis was done using Microsoft Excel 2010 version. Data was presented in Percentages and proportions.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Among the total 152 post menopausal women, demographic profile found that the majority (47%) of the women were from 46-50 years age group, three fourths were illiterates, belonged to Hindu religion and from Joint family. Majority were housewives followed by manual labourers and cultivation.

Table No 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the study population (n=152)

Demographic variable	Number	Percent
Age		
40-45 years	35	23%
46-50 years	71	47%
51-54years	46	30%
Literacy status		
Illiterate	110	73%
Literate	42	27%
Religion		
Hindu	109	72%
Muslim	34	22%
Christian	09	6%
Type of family		
Nuclear	42	28%
Joint	110	72%
Employment		
Manual Labourer	25	16%
Cultivation	21	14%
Others	11	8%
Housewife	95	62%
Marital status		
Currently married	112	74%
Widowed/Divorced	40	26%

With reference to various menopausal symptoms, prevalence of vasomotor symptoms including hot flushes & night sweats were observed in 38.6% & 43.7% of the study population respectively. Psychosomatic symptoms like sleep disturbances, muscle & joint pains were seen in almost half of the proportion. Other symptoms like tiredness, irritability seen in one third of the study population.

Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) and the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D) applied in the study population observed that the overall prevalence of anxiety and depression was found to be 18.8% and 26.5% respectively.

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Table 2: Distribution of postmenopausal women according to menopausal symptoms

Menopausal symptoms	Number (Percentage)*
Vasomotor symptoms	
Hot flushes	58 (38.6%)
Night sweats	66 (43.7%)
Psychosomatic symptoms	
Sleep disturbances	80 (52.7%)
Muscle & Joint pain	73 (48.4%)
Tiredness	60 (39.5%)
Irritability	56 (37.3%)
Dizziness	38 (25.3%)
Headache	32 (21.2%)
Palpitations	28 (18.5%)
Psychological symptoms	
Poor concentration	46 (30.5%)
Depression	40 (26.5%)
Anxiety	28 (18.8%)
Others (including sexual, urinary symptoms)	49 (32.5%)

* Multiple responses

Similar study done by Singh A et al in Delhi found that a total of 225 (89.3%) postmenopausal women experienced at least one or more menopausal symptom(s). The most common complaints of postmenopausal women were sleep disturbances (62.7%), muscle or joint pain (59.1%), hot flushes (46.4%) and night sweats (45.6%). A total of 32.1% (n=81) postmenopausal women suffered from depression and 21.0% (n=53) postmenopausal women suffered from anxiety.⁴

Another study by Borker SA et al in Kerala (2013) observed that the mean age of attaining menopause was 48.26 years. Prevalence of symptoms among ladies were emotional problems (crying spells, depression, irritability) 90.7%, headache 72.9%, lethargy 65.4%, dysuria 58.9%, forgetfulness 57%, musculoskeletal problems (joint pain, muscle pain) 53.3%, sexual problems (decreased libido, dyspareunia) 31.8%, genital problems (itching, vaginal dryness) 9.3%, and changes in voice 8.4%.⁶

A hospital based study among peri and postmenopausal women in Kathmandu, Nepal found that the mean age of menopause found to be 49.9% with urinary tract infection being the major clinical diagnosis and physical menopausal symptoms being the commonest. About 20% of respondent had MRS (menopausal rating scale) score more than 16.⁵

Another study by Rahman et al⁹ in Bangladesh found the prevalence of depression to be 37.3% and other study by Poomalar and Arounassalame in Puducherry reported prevalence of depression & anxiety was found to be 57.2% and 67.2% respectively.¹⁰

CONCLUSIONS

The present hospital based study among post menopausal women found a high prevalence of menopausal symptoms. The overall prevalence of anxiety and depression was seen in almost one fourth of the respondents. Vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes & night sweats) and few psychosomatic symptoms (sleep disturbances, muscle & joint pains) were observed in almost half of the proportions. Health education among women in the peri menopausal age group and specialist clinics at the primary & secondary health care level can probably cater the health care needs of the post menopausal women.

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