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**BOOK OF EXTENDED
ABSTRACTS**



A STUDY ON MENOPAUSE AMONG FEMALE HEALTH CARE WORKERS OVER 40 YEARS IN TEACHING HOSPITAL BATTICALOA.

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Abstract

Background: Menopause is a natural biological process that affects women's physiological, psychological and social wellbeing. This study is focused on knowledge and perception regarding menopause and menopausal symptoms among female health care workers at Teaching Hospital Batticaloa.

Method: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted from October 2020 to September 2021 among female health care workers over 40 years at Teaching Hospital Batticaloa. Though complete enumeration was used for sampling, and 170 individuals were recruited. The pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 25 (SPSS V.25) was used to enter and analyze the data.

Results: Of the sample, 32.9% were between 45 to 49 years, and 30% of the total population was in the post-menopausal stage. The 47.1% respondents had moderate knowledge, followed by 42.9% who had good knowledge regarding menopause. Only 48.8% knew about Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT). The mean knowledge score was 60.32±19.97. In terms of perception towards menopausal transition, nearly half (48.8%) of the population considered menopause a regular event, whereas 51.2% perceived menopause means a loss of femininity. Although 79.4% of women complained of menopausal symptoms, they reported that they did not affect their work and life.

Conclusion: Although most women over 40 years suffered from menopausal symptoms, their practice towards the management of symptoms was relatively low. It is recommended to create awareness of menopausal symptoms, control, and healthy practices among women and provide physical support for menopausal women.

Keywords: Menopause, Perception, Menopausal symptoms, Hot flushes, Peri-menopause

Introduction: Menopause is a natural biological process that affects women's physiological, psychological and social wellbeing. Only a few studies have been conducted on this area in Sri Lanka. The aim of this study was to assess the knowledge, perception of menopause and menopausal symptoms and to describe the impact of menopausal symptoms on the routine life among female health care workers over 40 years at Teaching Hospital Batticaloa.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 170 female health care workers at Teaching hospital-Batticaloa. Women above 40 years were selected and those who had undergone unnatural menopause due to hysterectomy and bilateral oophorectomy and on chemotherapy for any malignancy were excluded. Complete enumeration was used as the sampling method and a pretested self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. Data entering, analyzing, and interpreting was done by using Statistical Package of Social Science 25 (SPSS V.25). The descriptive analysis was employed in the calculation of frequencies and percentages and results were presented in the form of charts and tables for interpretation. Ethical approval was obtained from Ethical Review Committee (E/2021/11), Faculty of Health-Care Sciences, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

Results: This study included 170 health care workers. One-third (32.9%) of respondents were between 45-49 years old. The majority of health care workers were married (91.8%) and Tamil (82.4%) speaking. Nearly half (48.2%) of the population were pre-menopausal, 21.8% were in peri-menopausal while 30.0% were in the post-menopausal stage.

Knowledge regarding menopause, menopausal symptoms, and their health implications: The mean knowledge score was 60.32 ± 19.97 . In our study, 41.2% of respondents were aware of the definition of menopause and 92.9% consider it as a natural process. Regarding knowledge on menopausal transition, 71.8% considered joint and muscular discomfort as obvious menopausal symptoms and 71.2% were aware of osteoporosis as the most common long-term complication of menopause. About 42.9 % of health care workers had good knowledge while 47.1% had moderate

knowledge and 10% had weak knowledge regarding menopause and the menopausal transition.

Perception of menopausal transition: 55% of the total population had a positive perception while 44.7% of them had a negative perception. The negative and positive perceptions regarding menopause were almost equal.

Frequency of menopausal symptoms: Among the participants, 79.4% were reported one or more symptoms and 20.6% had no symptoms. Most of the menopausal symptoms were more prevalent in post-menopausal women like hot flushes and joint and muscular discomfort. Most of the female health care workers (79.4%) mentioned dietary management as their management practice to alleviate the above symptoms. Although post-menopause women had a higher prevalence of symptoms their management practices were low compared with pre and peri-menopausal women.

Association between knowledge level and management of menopausal symptoms: There were a significant association between knowledge level and early screening for long term consequences (chi-square = 13.714, df = 2, $p = 0.001$, $V = 0.284$) and HRT management (chi-square = 9.942, df = 2, $p = 0.007$, $V = 0.242$). Participants with good knowledge have a high tendency towards participating in early screening and taking HRT supplements to relieve menopausal symptoms. Both associations are medium according to Cramer's V (Cramér, 1946).

Impact of menopausal symptoms on routine life: Almost all female health care workers stated that there was no negative impact of menopausal symptoms on their routine life, whereas there was a significant impact on difficulties while lifting heavy objects, climbing stairs, bending, kneeling due to the menopausal symptoms.

Discussion: While most healthcare workers expected to have good knowledge of menopause, nearly half (47.1%) of healthcare workers had only moderate knowledge. Similar findings have been reported in a study which was conducted in Iran (Eslami et al., 2013). While more than half (55.3%) of female health care workers had a positive perception, the rest (44.7%) had a negative perception. A similar study conducted in Bhopal city, India reported that they have mixed perceptions regarding menopause (Sultan et al., 2017). Since our participants suggest a higher level of education and from the health sector, they are supposed to have a more positive attitude towards menopause. The present study revealed that physical symptoms

were more prominent among respondents compared to psychological and urogenital symptoms. The high prevalence of joint and muscular discomfort is consistent with previous study findings conducted in Sri Lanka. This study reported that symptoms were most prevalent among post-menopausal women compared to pre and peri-menopausal women. This result was similar to the previous studies done in Sri Lanka (Waidyasekera et al., 2009), (Rathnayake, Lenora, Alwis, & Lekamwasam, 2019), (Perera & Goonewardena, 2020). Most of the participants suggested dietary management (79.4%) to relieve the symptoms in this study and this finding is in contrast to other studies reported in women in UAE (Hamid et al., 2014). This study did not reveal any significant impairment on the routine life of women, in contrast to another study done among middle-aged women in Sri Lanka which showed that menopausal symptoms have a high impact on the routine life of both pre and post-menopausal women (Rathnayake et al., 2019). This may be because women in the healthcare workforce are attuned to being more tolerant of physical and mental discomfort. This finding may differ if conducted in another sample.

Conclusion: This study shows that the experience of menopausal symptoms was significantly higher among postmenopausal women but their practices of management were minimal. Health care workers should be encouraged to update their knowledge on this condition so that they can be utilized to create awareness and support in the community.

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