

ATTITUDE OF PREMENOPAUSAL WOMEN TOWARDS MENOPAUSAL CHANGES AND PREVENTIVE HEALTH MEASURES

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to study the attitude of premenopausal women towards menopausal changes and preventive health measures towards a safe menopause. A survey method using a 5 point Likert scale was administered to women (ages 35 to menopause N = 200) who were part of a larger study . The sample consisted of pre menopausal teaching faculty of schools and colleges in Coimbatore.

The results showed that most women had a positive attitude towards menopause, self esteem and felt that health and preventive measures were an individual's responsibility. About preparedness for menopause majority of women were positive to menopausal clinics and counseling centers to enable them to be prepared. The attitudes are positive on general issues but poor in relation to practices. Specific health seeking behavior related to prevention of risk factors of diabetes, cardio vascular diseases , cancers are lacking even in educated women.

INTRODUCTION

Menopausal period has an important role in the reproductive life of a woman and can lead to various physical and mental problems.

A total of 130 million Indian women are expected to live beyond menopause into old age by 2015 (Sengupta, A. 2003).

Though the life expectancy is increasing, the average age at menopause has been remained the same , as a result of which we see more women spending longer years in their post menopausal phase. Attitudes have a potential role to play in the experience of menopause. In recent years, growing importance has been afforded to assisting women in coping with the menopausal transition. Menopause is a normal stage of development and a woman's attitude toward this transition embodies biological, psychological and social influences. (Vitiello, D., Naftoilin, F., & Taylor, H. S. 2007). Women have reported to appreciate menopause in developing countries and especially in India and many researchers believe that reactions and attitudes to menopause are a cultural phenomenon.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

In recent years , growing importance has been afforded to assisting women in coping with menopausal transition. Menopause is a normal stage of development and a woman's

attitude toward this transition embodies biological, psychological and social influences. A more universal approach to the understanding of menopause can offer health professionals a broader view of the phenomenon. How women define their own experience of menopause differs according to their health beliefs , which are in turn shaped by culture. Across the globe women are divided in their views on menopause. Some take it as a medical condition requiring treatment, whereas others see it as a natural transition to be managed by natural means or perhaps have no access to evidence based medicines. (Kaur S. Walia I, Singh A. 2004)

This study was an attempt to understand the attitude of pre menopausal women towards menopause and the preventive measures to be adopted to ensure a healthy menopause. Many Indian women though educated still have doubts related to managing menopause and the increased health risks during this period. An understanding of the women's attitude will help in making the health professionals take a conscious and rational step towards educating and preparing the women in the pre menopausal phase . It is important to encourage schools and other educational institutions, medical care providers and the health department to cooperate in educating women about menopause, its symptoms, long term consequences and treatment options. This combined effort by educational programs and health care providers will help in increasing public awareness. This may result in significant improvement in both life expectancy and quality of life of women in future. (Nisar Nusrat et al., 2008)

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of premenopausal women towards menopause and preventive health measures.

SAMPLE

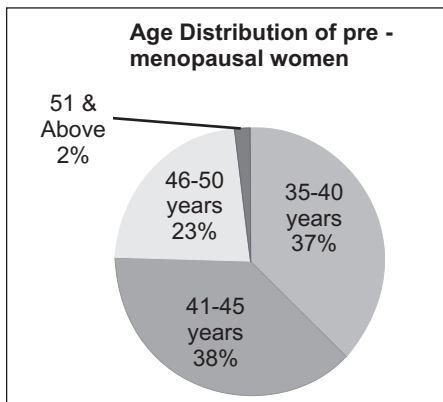
The sample for this research consisted of 200 women between the ages of 35 to menopause all of them being part of a larger study related to premenopausal health empowerment in prevention of certain increased health risks during menopause. Subjects were recruited from among teaching faculty of schools and colleges within Coimbatore city .

Coimbatore is an educational city and has a number of schools and colleges . A large number of teachers are women and most teachers are in the pre menopausal phase of ages 35 to menopause. No menopausal clinics or special health programs are available for preparing the women towards menopause.

TOOL

A 5 point Likert scale was developed to study the attitude of pre menopausal women. The scale was validated to determine whether or not each statement was capable of discriminating between respondents who have overall favorable and overall unfavorable opinions about the subject. A total of 35 women were administered the scale the results were tabulated and only the questions that had a difference of 30 % or more between the upper third and lower third were accepted for the scale. A total of 20 questions were finally selected for the Likert scale to study the attitude of women in relation to their attitude, preparedness of

menopause , preventive health measures and health practices.



RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The age of the women selected for the study ranged from 35years to menopause. Of the 200 women . 75(37%) were in the age group of 35-40 years, 76 (38%) women between 41-45, 45 (23%) women between 46-50 and 4 (2%) women were 51 and above.

The marital status of the women showed 188 women were married, 8 women were unmarried and 4 women were widows.

In regards to the statement that “Women should have the freedom to take decisions related to their health,” 45% of women strongly agreed, 49.5% agreed, 4.5% had no

specific opinion and only 1% disagreed. The evidence point to the fact that women strongly believe that health is the concern of an individual and freedom related to health decisions are an individual’s choice.

In relation to the statement “Women’s health empowerment is not realistic for Indian women”, 17% strongly disagreed, 61% disagreed 11% had no opinion and 11% agreed to it out of which only 1% strongly agreed. Majority of the women 78% believe that health empowerment is a realistic goal for Indian women.

The practice related questions revealed a large number of women having “no opinion” which reflects a lacuna in practice associated with menopausal health.

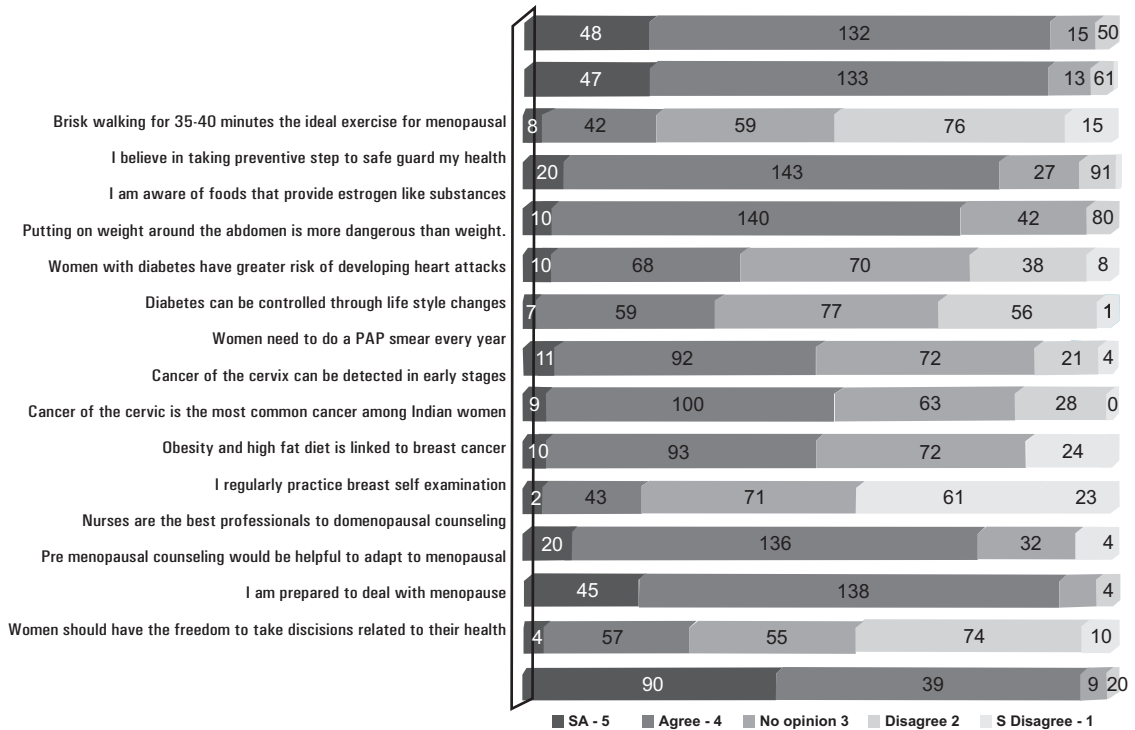
Only 2 women (1%) strongly agreed to the practice self breast examination regularly, while 43 women 21.5 % agreed to practicing self breast examination, 35.5% had no opinion on self breast examination and 42% disagreed to regular practice of SBE. Women need to taught with demonstration the SBE technique to be able to confidently practice it and recognize and report any deviations from normal.

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Pre menopausal Women's Response

n=200



91.5% of women agreed that pre menopausal counseling would help to adapt to menopausal changes. 81.5 % of women agreed that putting on weight around the abdomen was more dangerous that weight around the hips which is true. Central obesity is associated with metabolic syndrome leading to type 2 diabetes mellitus and cardio vascular diseases.

78% of the women disagreed to the statement “Women’s health empowerment is not realistic for Indian women” , which showed women believe it a possible reality and a need. Only 25 % of the women expressed that they were not comfortable to discuss on menopause. 60.5 % of women are comfortable to talk and discuss on issues related to menopause and related health. 78% of the women did not believe or agree that women become less attractive after menopause. This shows that the pre

menopausal women had a strong positive self image and age or menopause did not make a person less attractive.

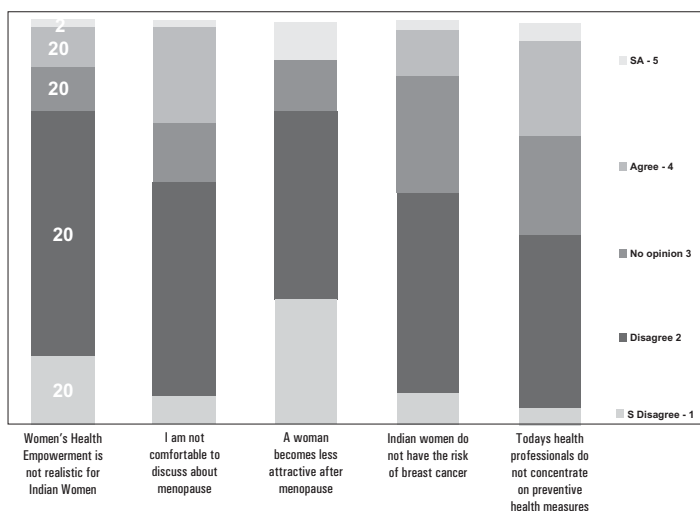
57.5 % of women did not agree to the statement that “Indian women do not have the risk of breast cancer”, which showed a realistic approach and more Indian women are developing breast cancer. However 29% of women did not have an opinion on it , which denoted they were not sure of the issue. Only 13.5 % of the women felt that cancer breast was not a risk for Indian women, which is not true and these women need further education to understand the risk related to cancer breast. 47% of the women disagreed and 28.5 % agreed to the statement that” Today’s health professionals do not concentrate on preventive health.” The women still rely and trust their health professionals to initiate preventive measure to safeguard their future health.

Attitude towards Negative Statement

n=200

CONCLUSION

Menopause and its surrounding years are important for women and women feel a strong desire to be empowered with knowledge and skills contributing to a healthy menopausal period. Women are open to discussions and counseling related to menopause. There is a strong need for education related to health supportive behavior to be adopted contributing to a healthy menopause. The attitudes are positive on general



issues but poor in relation to practices. Specific health seeking behavior related to prevention of risk factors of diabetes, cardio vascular diseases, cancers are lacking even in educated women. Women in this study felt a strong need for menopausal clinics in order to gain optimum information contributing to health during this period of their lives. Nurses as menopausal counselors are widely accepted and this trend if adopted by nurses could lead to a more health empowered menopausal group of women. The results of this study represent a continuing effort to uncover the factors that influence the menopausal experience with the aim of enhancing women's health during this transition

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